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# The Origin of Ideas According to St. Augustine and St. Thomas

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THE ORIGIN OF IDEAS ACCORDING TO ST. AUGUSTINE AND ST. THOMAS

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August 1937

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### AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Miss Kato Andrea Kiszely of Budapest, Hungary, was educated at the Szazados Uccai girls preparatory school and attended the Magyar kir. Pazmany Peter Tudomanyos University of Budapest, Hungary, 1930-31.

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## INTRODUCTION

The development of Scholastic philosophy is marked by two distinct tendencies, called today the Two Great Traditions of Scholasticism. On the one hand, there is the philosophy of St. Augustine representing Platonic thought as it is brought into harmony with the doctrines of Christianity, and on the other, the system of St. Thomas built on Aristotelian principles. Each starting from a different foundation and pursuing a method of speculation peculiar to it, arrives at conclusions in conformity with Christian teaching. But while we find coincidence in their ultimate conclusions, we find numerous divergencies in their approach. As Maritain says:

To compare Augustine and St. Thomas is a paradoxical task, where the intellect must abandon its natural method of approach which consists in juxtaposition upon one plane seeking coincidences; it must discern unity in non-coincidence.<sup>1</sup>

The task of this thesis is not to emphasize diversities or to strive to work out similarities, but to find unity by giving account of both.

The human intellect requires for its proper exercise and discipline, different avenues of approach to the same truth; hence we need both teachers. Their very difference is inherent proof of our need for both; for if they were identical, we could indifferently substitute one for the other.<sup>2</sup>

The characterization given by Raphael to Plato and Aristotle in his "School of Athens", one pointing skyward to the world of Ideas, the latter to

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<sup>1</sup>Maritain, J., A Monument to St. Augustine, p. 199.

<sup>2</sup>Vega, St. Augustine, His Philosophy, p. 12.

earth, is to be found in the philosophy of their Christian interpreters, which comes to view especially in their theory of knowledge.

There were disputes surrounding the philosophy of St. Augustine in the Middle Ages as well as in our own times. The controversies between St. Thomas and Bonaventure are well known. These disputes can be divided into two groups, accordingly as they teach whether we must interpret the Augustinian theory of knowledge on Platonic, or on Aristotelian, grounds. In other words, the question whether knowledge is an ascent, or a descent, and have we according to St. Augustine an intuitive knowledge of God in this life, and if so, by what kind of species?<sup>1</sup> These controversies were revived with the appearance of Ontologism, which, leaning on the authority of Augustine, thought the intuition of the Divine essence, while their opponents proved the error of their tenets by quoting the interpretation given to the philosophy of Augustine by St. Thomas, who turned the teaching of Divine Illumination to the natural intellectual light, the Intellectus Agens.

Hessen says:

According to St. Thomas the Intellectus Agens is a creature of God and a reflection of the Divine Intelligence, but in its operation it needs Divine influence and guidance. Its light is received from the eternal source of light, since the First Principles are the images of Eternal Truth.<sup>2</sup>

Indeed, St. Thomas maintains that Augustine could only have meant by his doctrine of illumination that the Creator placed in each creature with its being, its intelligibility, i. e., the ontological Truth. And in the intelli-

<sup>1</sup>Jansen, Der Kampf um Augustinus im 13 Jahrhundert (Stim. der Zeit, 8, '26), p. 91.

<sup>2</sup>Hessen, Augustinische und Thomistische Erkenntnislehre, p. 53.

gent soul at the same time, He placed an aptitude for the eternal laws of reason, i. e., for logical truth. Stoeckel is of the opinion that we must interpret the Augustinian thought in the same sense as it is explained by Christian Scholasticism.<sup>1</sup> But while doing so, it is evident that Augustine followed the principle doctrines of Plato, the cornerstone of which is the direct intuition of Truth. Thus it is nearer to Augustine when an interpretation takes into consideration its Platonic origin, than the one which strives too hard for an Aristotelian explanation. St. Thomas himself while attempting this, admits Augustine's Platonism. "St. Augustine followed Plato insofar as it is permissible by the Catholic faith."<sup>2</sup>

The double interpretation given to Augustine can be narrowed down when we read in his works, those especially written against the pagan philosophers, that he valued the Platonic thought the most. He classifies Aristotle among the Platonics, but places him below his master, so far as calling him a heretic.<sup>3</sup> Augustine finds that in Platonism, as it is interpreted by Plotinus, the few discrepancies of Plato are reconciled,<sup>4</sup> and it appeals to him for its spirituality, for its recognition of Truth which is absolute and changeless, because it is a philosophy of not what appears to the senses, but of what is apprehended by thought. The external world interested St. Augustine only insofar as its appearances is the manifestation of God in the natural order, but outside of this it is apt to distract man from higher issues.

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<sup>1</sup>Stoeckel, History of Philosophy, p. 312.

<sup>2</sup>St. Thom., Quaestiones Disp. de Spir. Creat. a. 10.

<sup>3</sup>St. Augustine, De Civitate Dei, viii, ch. 12.

<sup>4</sup>St. Augustine, Contra Academicos, iii, 18.

It is possible, however, to find some parallel between St. Augustine and the Aristotelian thought, but an analysis in the Aristotelian sense would rob the mystical beauty of the Augustinian speculation.

At the very beginning of our investigation of the two doctrines we shall notice that Augustine's theory of knowledge moves in a different sphere. It is more of a moral science in which the interior disposition of man is of primary importance in the acquisition of knowledge. Truth should be sought for moral perfection and for the Ultimate End of man. He considers man in his fallen nature, therefore what he is interested in is, how can we attain that beatitude without which man must forever remain in misery. In this life, he says,

We have wandered far from God, and if we wish to return to our father's home, this world must be used and not enjoyed, that thereby the invisible things of God may be clearly seen; being understood by the things that are made, by means of what is material and temporary we may lay hold upon that which is spiritual and eternal.<sup>1</sup>

It is necessary to point out Augustine's attitude, lest his theory of knowledge seem unfinished or obscure in comparison to St. Thomas' brilliant clarity and completeness. It was not so much the process of ideation Augustine interested himself in, but rather in the intimate relation of our mind with Eternal Truth. Thus his doctrine of Divine Illumination moves him straight to God, but does not fully explain man in his natural powers.

St. Thomas, on the other hand, by postulating an abstractive power inherent in man, makes man the efficient cause of that light, shedding actual

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<sup>1</sup> St. Augustine, De. Doctr. Christ., I, ch. iv.



intelligibility on created things. He does not ignore the steps necessary for man to reach his Ultimate End, but he draws the dividing line distinguishing the natural process of ideation from the light of Grace elevating man into a higher order.

Now, just as Augustine with Platonic principles at hand goes beyond the conclusions of Plato or Plotinus, likewise St. Thomas develops the doctrines contained in the Aristotelian principles in a germinal state, and deduces their last consequences without introducing elements foreign to it. It would be an error therefore to call St. Thomas merely an interpreter of Aristotle, because he did more than just comment on his doctrines. This becomes more evident when we consider the Arab commentators of Aristotle. They introduced a world of mysticism into that philosophy of sober realism. St. Thomas, on the other hand, by separating the object of philosophy from the object of theology, kept clear from the danger of mixing elements which came from faith. His conviction that unaided reason cannot be in contradiction with the contents of faith—because the latter, while it is a negative guide for scientific research, is not its object, therefore does not determine the content of such knowledge—saved the autonomy of both fields, yet kept them in harmony. Thus he was able to develop further the Aristotelian principles from their own intrinsic value, without moulding them from external sources as the Arabs did.

That St. Thomas was acquainted with the Arabs, the Jews and the Philosophy of the Patristic Fathers, is evident from his ample comments. He valued highly the thought of Plato for its soaring idealism—his numerous quotations of Augustine prove this. But his attitude towards Aristotle is entirely different. The honorary title "The Philosopher" shows, that for him, Aristotle

is the real authority. Whenever using Augustinian authority St. Thomas strives to reduce the distance of its content from Aristotle, so that it may easily be adapted to his own.

Now, just as Aristotle's most mature work is the monograph "De Anima", so is St. Thomas' psychology the most developed part of his natural philosophy. It unites experience with a deep speculative investigation into the essence of the soul, its origin and its relation to the body. He gives evidence of the keenest observation of experience in the midst of his most metaphysical speculations, as we see it by his numerous concrete examples. But the emphasis is always on metaphysics. We can safely say therefore that his psychology is first of all the metaphysics of the human soul, and upon this metaphysical foundation are built all his discussions of the particular movements of the soul. Starting with the basic dictum "Nihil est in intellectu quod non fuit prius in sensu", it is easy to follow step by step the explanation St. Thomas offers for the origin of our ideas. The task is not so easy with Augustine, who admits two sources of our natural knowledge. The very essence of philosophy according to St. Augustine is dependent upon the Incarnation and all that follows from it. Wisdom can only be attributed to the one who knows how to attain his salvation and not to the one who can define wisdom. But unless God revealed the way and provided the means to attain this wisdom man would be groping in darkness forever falling into error. True philosophy therefore is based on faith; and on this conception, this intimate union of faith and reason gives a color which is peculiar to all his speculations.

As a result of his Platonism, on the one hand, he has a conception of the relation of soul and body which characterizes his whole theory of knowledge—but knowledge as Plato has interpreted does not satisfy St. Augustine—his Christianity moves him to a more profound plane, to seek a knowledge which is worthy of the name. Thus over and above our powers of knowledge he places as the last vestige of truth, Revelation, and as our first derivation of truth, Faith.

## CHAPTER I

### THE ROLE OF FAITH IN AUGUSTINE'S THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE

In the time of St. Augustine as in our own time, the history of philosophy proclaimed the bankruptcy of unaided reason. Divers philosophies as he points out<sup>1</sup> led to varied conclusions about matters of supreme importance, conclusions which are hopelessly in contradiction with one another. The whole philosophy of Augustine was but a quest of truth where the possibility of error is excluded; no wonder he denied that there can be a philosophy in the proper sense of the term without faith. Speculation in order to rest on a sure foundation must be built on faith, because knowledge has a great influence in the pursuit of the Ultimate End of man. Truth should be sought for that end, and when we really are in the possession of true knowledge we are on our way to that end. But in order to find truth, the mind must be so disposed that it will not be apt to fall into error; this is accomplished by faith strengthening the mind in such manner that nothing but truth leading to that end has an appeal to it. Perfection in this life is nothing but to reach forth in purpose, but that is the right purpose which starts from faith; "let us therefore be so minded as to know that the disposition to seek the truth is more safe than that which presumes things unknown to be known."<sup>2</sup>

In our understanding, authority prepares man for reason, and reason prepares him for knowledge. The whole teaching of St. Augustine rests on two

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<sup>1</sup> St. Augustine, The City of God, xviii, ch. 41.

<sup>2</sup> St. Augustine, De Trinitate, ix, ch. 1.

foundations: on faith and on reason. "No one doubts that there are two ways to knowledge: authority and reason."<sup>1</sup> In itself, reason stands above authority because the evidence which is present in understanding is lacking in faith, but it is also true that one cannot come to a knowledge unless it was first heard through authority.

By necessity we come to knowledge in two ways, by authority and by reason. In time, authority, but in itself, reason is the first. It is one thing which is first in act and another whose attainment is of greater value.<sup>2</sup>

Repeatedly St. Augustine emphasizes that it is in the order of nature that when we learn a thing, authority must precede reason,<sup>3</sup> i. e., before we understand a thing we must already believe something at least, the premises must be furnished by authority in order that reason may come to a conclusion. He seems to call the very light of truth an authority, because he maintains that every truth known by evidence exercises over our minds an authority that is irresistible.<sup>4</sup> But the light of truth coming from Revelation, the infallible authority, must be embraced by faith even if not comprehended by reason. Here he distinguishes between the truths proposed by faith:

- 1 the intelligible truths, and
- 2 truths comprehensible to human reason<sup>5</sup>

but faith is indispensable in either one, since we cannot at once grasp the truth of a thing, and the danger of falling into error is too great if we pro-

<sup>1</sup>St. Augustine, Contra Academicos, iii, n. 43.

<sup>2</sup>St. Augustine, De Ordine, ii, n. 26.

<sup>3</sup>St. Augustine, De Mor. Eccl., 1, n. 3.

<sup>4</sup>St. Augustine, Epist., cxx, ch.1; De Ordine, ii, ch. v.

<sup>5</sup>St. Augustine, De Util. Cred., ch. vii.

ceed independently; one may risk the attainment of beatitude. "Innumerable are the questions that must not be finished before faith, lest life be finished without faith."<sup>1</sup>

Faith and reason are mutually assisting each other; reason demands the authority of faith, faith in turn requires the exercise of reason. No one can believe unless he knows what to believe, and in knowing this, reason should precede faith. In his letter to Constantinus he writes:

To acquire certain indispensable truths which reason cannot comprehend, reason explicitly teaches that faith must precede reason, but in this very act, reason just as implicitly teaches that reason itself in some degree at least must precede faith since reason shows the necessity of faith.<sup>2</sup>

Starting with faith therefore we should proceed toward understanding, because the truths contained in Revelation are beyond the comprehension of reason, but to have a fuller understanding of its content we must seek its meaning with diligence. Reason can follow its own process of pursuit here, but must not lost its true object by turning to earthly things, "Faith seeks and intellect finds."<sup>3</sup> But great as is the intellect in dignity and power, of itself it is unable to attain its object. Distorted by passions, degraded by sin, confused by sensible images, it cannot attain fully to truth. But the very reason of bestowing man with an intellect was so that he can see truth and enjoy its contemplation. This end, however, would be unattainable unless we had a Divine Guarantee of truth, since in itself reason is so apt to follow what appears to be truth and hence fall into error.

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<sup>1</sup> St. Augustine, Epist., cii, n. 38.

<sup>2</sup> St. Augustine, Ibid., cxx, ch. 1.

<sup>3</sup> St. Augustine, De Trinitate, xv, ch. ii.

He divides reason into false and true reason, calling it true by the virtue of man's supremacy amid creation, and false by reason of the frailty of man, following the Fall. To denounce reason completely would be to rob man of the dignity of his human nature, but in speaking of it we must constantly distinguish between the two. The authority of God is absolutely necessary in our present state to free our minds from error.<sup>1</sup> Human reason alone is not sufficient to judge the truth of anything, it cannot guarantee the soundness of one knowledge or reveal the falsity of the other; the matters to be found in any one system of thought should therefore be tested before the truths of Divine Revelation.<sup>2</sup> Thus Revelation is at once the source, the end and the test of true knowledge. With emphasis he quotes the prophet Isaias, "If you do not believe you will not understand."<sup>3</sup> But man being essentially rational naturally seeks to comprehend the things held by faith; Augustine says that the Scriptures themselves which urge faith before understanding of great things cannot be of utility to man unless we understand them rightly.<sup>4</sup> Starting with faith we should advance in our understanding by reasoning about those truths, but always in due subordination to Divine Authority. This method of procedure is necessary even in our knowledge of things of nature. This becomes evident when we wish to learn something new. The teacher first tells us that something is true, then he shows the reasons why it is true. Here again by reason of the weakness of the human mind authority must be the starting point, or the

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<sup>1</sup> St. Augustine, *The City of God*, xi, ch. ii; xix, ch. xiv.

<sup>2</sup> St. Augustine, *Ibid.*, xviii, ch. xli; *Conf.*, iv, ch. v.

<sup>3</sup> Isaias, vii, 9.

<sup>4</sup> St. Augustine, *Epist.*, cxxci, iii.

guarantee of truth, whenever the discoveries of human reason are conformed to it. This authority cannot ultimately be human reason itself, because reason appeals to an aid superior to itself to behold truth.<sup>1</sup> St. Augustine does not deny of course that guided by the light of reason man can find out certain truths, but acquired in this manner, knowledge lacks certitude. It is not truth alone that man receives through faith, but a certitude, a guarantee that the knowledge thus gained is sound.

It is possible guided by the light of reason to find out the most profound truth but with great effort of investigation and with uncertainty of conclusion.<sup>2</sup>

Preceding faith, intelligence is nothing but natural reason, and its knowledge does not bear on the content of faith, but reason has an inclination towards ultimate truths, which last foundation of all other truths cannot be explored without faith. He knows from his experience with the Manicheans that reason without faith is powerless to lead to truths which are infallibly certain, and knowledge based on reason alone usually leads to Scepticism. This is why his epistemological investigations lead to that foundation which guarantees the soundness of human knowledge, and apart from that he is not interested in the process of knowledge as such. Truths proposed by faith can be explored, we can philosophize about them, we can come to some understanding of them, then we can analyze the nature and the operations of man in that light, because having this security, reason can proceed by its light to see the things which are already held by the firmness of faith,<sup>3</sup> although not explicitly known.

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<sup>1</sup>St. Augustine, De Morib. Eccl., I, ch. 2.

<sup>2</sup>St. Augustine, De Quantit. Animae, ch. 8.

<sup>3</sup>St. Augustine, Epist., cxx, ch. 1.



He admits that the contents of faith cannot fully be known, and often he reminds us that "by necessity of its nature faith implies obscurity",<sup>1</sup> but yet it is clear that faith gives us some grasp upon its content. "Faith is not blind; it has eyes to see with clearness, with distinctness, and with certitude, truths which it is unable to comprehend."<sup>2</sup> And this grasping of truth with certitude even though not fully understanding it, is what shows the great utility of belief in knowledge.

In a controversy one of the disputants tells St. Augustine that "I want to understand in order to believe", to which he receives the answer: "Believe and then you will understand." Then both of them turning to the infallible authority of the prophet receive the answer: "If you do not believe you will not understand."<sup>3</sup> But in a way Augustine gives approval to the man also who said "I want to understand in order to believe", because faith can develop in man only if he knows what he must believe. He closes the argument with the advice: Seek thee to understand that you may believe, and believe that you may understand. The reward of man's accepting the truths of faith upon authority is intelligence, a more abundant light of truth than that which is attainable by the light of reason. All truths, whether scientific, philosophical, theological, must lead man to his ultimate end, because the whole end of knowledge is to reach that blessedness which consists in the contemplation of truth as the end attained. Faith is the means to reach that end, and while

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<sup>1</sup>St. Augustine, De Trinitate, iv, ch. xviii.

<sup>2</sup>St. Augustine, Epist., cxx, ch. 1.

<sup>3</sup>St. Augustine, Sermons, 43, n. 9.

the blessedness is willed by all men, the means are not,<sup>1</sup> so it happens that truth is apt to escape that knowledge which is not founded on faith—because that knowledge not having a necessary conformity with truth does not necessarily lead man to his ultimate end.

There must, however, be a natural knowledge before faith, which is natural reason, and if there was some knowledge of God before faith, this is increased when external authority awakens in us the love for the truths of faith.

Faith avails to the knowledge and to the love of God, not as though of one altogether unknown, or altogether not loved; but so that thereby He may be known more intimately and loved more steadfastly.<sup>2</sup>

The statement that faith is not a vehicle to the knowledge of God as something altogether unknown, reveals that precedence of a natural knowledge of God, and that intuition which is awakened by authority. Now if we consider that the whole purpose of Augustine's philosophical speculations is to know oneself and God, we can see the bearing of faith on knowledge, where external authority causes to arise in us a glimpse of truth which if followed by faith is amplified in content and in certainty. We shall see later that in the process of ordinary thinking also we advance from the knowledge of external things to Eternal truths, which in turn serve as an aid in our attainment of a better knowledge of exterior things. Likewise in our knowledge regarding the truths of religion: the truths proposed by external authority increase our faith if those truths are seen in the light of faith. But in St. Augustine it is not a

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<sup>1</sup>St. Augustine, De Trinitate, xiii, ch. xx, 25.

<sup>2</sup>St. Augustine, Ibid., viii, 13.

mere parallel between natural knowledge and the knowledge received from supernatural Faith, but a direct subordination where only that knowledge can be admitted to be worthy of the name, which participates in the truths proposed by Faith.

Thus the ultimate ground of all our knowledge is found in Faith according to St. Augustine. Knowledge has no meaning if it does not correspond to the doctrines of faith, but knowledge which is in harmony with it shares in that beatitude which is the Ultimate End of man. Knowledge to Augustine is a beatitude, but only that can be called beatitude which conforms man to the end for which he was made. It is essential that man shall reach that end, but only through knowledge and love can he seek that end; therefore the utility of faith in that pursuit, because its role is to "know God better and love Him more steadfastly". By the increase of knowledge through Faith love is also increased, and with the increase of love the pursuit is increased, but the increase of that pursuit prompted by faith and love increases our knowledge until the End is reached, and that beatitude for the sake of which all knowledge should be sought.

## CHAPTER II

### THE TWO DISTINCT CONCEPTIONS OF THE HUMAN SOUL CHARACTERIZING THE THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE

Starting with Augustine's Platonism, it is necessary to note that he called any notion of the soul's preexistence incredible,<sup>1</sup> but he followed the Platonic definition of the soul's essence considering it to be a complete substance making use of the body,<sup>2</sup> governing it,<sup>3</sup> each retaining its own substantial nature, in due subordination cooperating to the same end. He combated the Platonic doctrine of the union of soul and body to the point of declaring that instead of discord, there is a true harmony between them; "if the body ought to be subordinated to the soul as a being to its inferior, the two substances are none the less associated in common work."<sup>4</sup> Maintaining a complete dualism of soul and body Augustine regards man as a union of two substances, and this conception affects his whole philosophical speculation which comes to light most pronouncedly when we are looking for an explanation of knowledge.

Starting from inner experience, Augustine gains his knowledge of the soul by its manifold activities, but he will not establish a real distinction between the soul and its potencies, but on the contrary he identifies them with its essence. "Mind, love and knowledge are essentially in the soul; memory,

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<sup>1</sup>St. Augustine, De Trinitate, xii, 15.

<sup>2</sup>St. Augustine, De Moribus Eccl. Cath., I, xxvii.

<sup>3</sup>St. Augustine, De Quant. Anim., 13.

<sup>4</sup>Hatzfeld, St. Augustine, p. 122.

will and intellect are one essence."<sup>1</sup> St. Thomas comments on this passage, distinguishing in what sense we must understand it if we wish to maintain a real distinction between the powers and the essence of the soul--by saying that we may predicate a potential oneness of the soul and its powers by an improper predication. We may say that the whole is in each part potentially according to essence, however, not according to power. But since St. Augustine speaks of the knowledge the soul has of itself here, this is the only sense in which we must understand it.<sup>2</sup> However, we find that Augustine returns to this doctrine time and time again. For example where he is trying to prove with an analogy of the mixture of vine water and honey uniting into one fluid, and the oneness of the soul with love and knowledge; remembering that the first, (vine water and honey) does not result in one substance, but there is nothing to keep the latter (soul, love and knowledge) from being essentially one.

When the soul loves itself, knows itself, these three things are together so that the object of love and knowledge is not the soul of another being, therefore it is necessary that these three are essentially one.<sup>3</sup>

Not acting through powers distinct from its essence, the soul becomes an immediate principle of activity in intellectual as well as in sensible knowledge as it will become clear in the following chapters. This was also characteristic of Plato, who

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<sup>1</sup>St. Augustine, De Trinitate, ix, n. 4.

<sup>2</sup>St. Thomas, Summa, I, qu. 77, a.1 ad. lum.

<sup>3</sup>St. Augustine, De Trinitate, ix, n. 7.

drew a distinction between intellect and sense, yet he referred both to an incorporeal principle, maintaining that sensing just as understanding belongs to the soul as such.<sup>1</sup>

St. Thomas, on the other hand, in his search for the essence of the soul points out its characteristics of perfectionibility, of mobility, and its immediate unity with the body to compose one single substance, so that we cannot speak of a soul and a body as two complete and independent substances in man, but of one psycho-physical substance—man.<sup>2</sup> The soul is the substantial form of the substance man, and is related to the body by its very nature as form is related to matter to compose a subsistent thing. That this union is immediate, he shows by the relation of a potentia to its act where no medium is admitted to unite the two, but the efficient causality of the agent is sufficient to reduce the potency to act.<sup>3</sup> Man derives his specific nature from the soul as well as his being: this argument he uses against the Platonic conception, where the union is that of the mover with the movable. In such relation St. Thomas says man would not be one substance,<sup>4</sup> therefore it is necessary to establish a substantial union.

To Plato, the intellectual operations of man could only be explained if the soul is conceived as a higher substance with an intimate relation with the immaterial world, and therefore distinct from the body which is merged in matter, but St. Thomas maintains on the contrary that the intellectuality of the

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<sup>1</sup> St. Thomas, Summa, I, qu. 75, a. 3.

<sup>2</sup> St. Thomas, Quaest. Disp. De Anima, qu. 1, art. 1 ad 3um; Cont. Gent., II, ch. 68, 71; Summa, qu. 76, art. 4.

<sup>3</sup> St. Thomas, Contra Gentiles, II, ch. 71.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., ch. 57.

soul is not an impediment to a substantial union with matter, "Because the higher the form, the more unity it gives",<sup>1</sup> therefore this excellence is an aid to greater unity, if by its nature, the soul is to be the form of the body.

After establishing the substantial unity of soul and body in man, St. Thomas sees that man is not immediately operative, because this is not a property of created substances, and for the same reason the soul which is the "first principle of life in those things which live" cannot be an immediate principle of operation. He places between a substance constituted in its essence and its natural operations, powers which are really distinct from it as accidents are distinct from substance. These powers play the role of instrumentality through which the soul exercises itself.

The soul does not move the body by its essence as the form of the body, but by the motive power, that act, which presupposes the body to be already actualized by the soul; so that the soul by its motive power is the part which moves, and the animate body is the part moved.<sup>2</sup>

And again:

The soul is the act of the body which body has life potentially, i. e., by the soul it is a body and it is organic, but in respect to its second acts which is operation, the soul remains in potentiality.<sup>3</sup>

It is impossible he says for the soul to be identical with its potencies, because the soul as form of the body is act, and therefore if the potencies were identical with it, they would be actualized. But we see that the soul is in potency to further acts, and although the essence of the soul is one, we see that its acts and objects are many, therefore the faculties must be many, and

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., II, ch. 78; Summa, I, qu. 76, art. 1.

<sup>2</sup>St. Thomas, Summa, I, qu. 76, art. 4, ad 2um.

<sup>3</sup>St. Thomas. Ibid., art. 4. ad 1um.

hence not identical with the essence of the soul.<sup>1</sup> This distinction must not be understood in the sense of independent substantial powers, but as fundamental tendencies of the soul.

The potencies are the principles of operation whether of action or of passion. Not, however, the principle as the subject acting or acted upon, but principles by which the agent acts or is acted upon.<sup>2</sup>

Only in this sense can we speak of a medium between soul and body, but not as regarding being, only in respect to perfection and movement; since the soul operates only through its powers.

Here the distinction St. Thomas makes between first and second acts makes clear the respective order of acts in the operation of the soul. As subject of its powers the soul is called first act, but with a further relation to second acts. The soul by its essence is an act, but is not always actual with respect to its operations, therefore it is in potentiality in regard to operation, which is a second act.<sup>3</sup> Again, when he speaks of the powers of the soul, he divides them according to the mode of their operations.<sup>4</sup> Not any variety of objects indeed, but their formal object, each aspect of the thing being the proper object of a certain power; e. g., a thing as colored is the object of the eye, a thing as sonorous the object of the ear, etc., this way eliminating the superfluous and admitting only a minimum of potencies which is required to explain the operations of man.

<sup>1</sup>St. Thomas, De Spirit. Creat., art. 11.

<sup>2</sup>St. Thomas, De Anima, qu. 1, art. 12.

<sup>3</sup>St. Thomas, Summa, I, qu. 77, art. 1.

<sup>4</sup>St. Thomas, De Anima, i, art. 13.



In his theory of knowledge St. Thomas investigates the operations of these powers with great precision. Seeking the source of our sensible and intellectual knowledge he traces the process step by step from sensible phenomenon to the conception of our ideas. He says that

The intellectual soul holds the lowest place among intellectual substances, and inasmuch as it is not naturally gifted with the knowledge of truth as the angels are, it has to gather knowledge from individual things by way of the senses.<sup>1</sup>

At its union with its matter the soul has only an aptitude for knowledge, but it is like a "tabula rasa" in relation to it. This is not quite so evident in the philosophy of St. Augustine. We cannot start with a potentially intelligent soul to actual knowledge maintaining the continuity of the process in the natural order, and here is where we find the profundity of St. Augustine's mysticism. De Wulf is of the opinion that we can explain the presence of ideas in the soul according to St. Augustine either by successive Divine interventions as our intellect develops, or else by one unique Divine act which deposits in the soul a storehouse of knowledge at the moment of its union with the body.<sup>2</sup> With St. Thomas' principles at hand it is easy to see how through a series of causations starting from sensible cognition to the most abstract and universal ideas the soul is reduced from potential intelligence to actual knowledge. It is not easy to gather this material in the Augustinian theory due to his dualism of soul and body. Now, in the dualism of Plato, memory had an important part in the theory of knowledge because knowledge to him is but a

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<sup>1</sup>St. Thomas, Summa, I, qu. 77, art. 6.

<sup>2</sup>De Wulf, History of Philosophy, p. 119.

reminiscence. But we saw in the beginning of this chapter, that Augustine denied outright any notion of the preexistence of the soul, therefore memory has not the same relation to knowledge for him as for Plato. However, memory has an important function according to St. Augustine in the acquisition of our knowledge, and it is necessary to devote space to it because his analysis of knowledge will be more intelligible following this reflection.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE ROLE OF MEMORY IN THE AUGUSTINIAN THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE

Memory has an important function in knowledge according to St. Augustine; so much so, that true knowledge is impossible without it. And when we speak of "true" knowledge, it is well to mention that the predominating note of his whole philosophy is to distinguish the true from the false and to take for truth in the strict sense of the term, only that which is at the same time a contribution to the Ultimate End of man. This of course involves man as a moral being making use of his will in the acquisition of knowledge, and the primacy of faith as we have seen.

Plato taught a doctrine of memory which necessarily supposed some participation of the human soul in Divine Truth; the soul according to him was endowed with certain ideas in its former existence and did not lose them completely because it can remember them spontaneously when some created thing awakens its attention. This was a theory where the ideas are ready at hand in a potential state.

We find also in St. Augustine that we have some knowledge which did not come through the senses. For example when we hear these three kinds of questions: Is there anything? What is it? What kind is it?, we receive the impressions of the words, i. e., the elements of which the words are composed, and from these we know that they passed with some sound and they exist no more. But the things however which these sounds signified we never touched

with any sense of the body. Outside of the soul, we have never seen them, and of these we stored not the images in the memory but the things themselves.<sup>1</sup> He admits he does not know where these ideas come from.<sup>2</sup> Similar passages of St. Augustine are often interpreted in favor of innatism, but upon further investigation of his theory of teaching and memory we shall see that he is not guilty of that charge.

Memory is indispensable for him in knowledge, not because we awaken innate ideas, but because without it we could not identify or associate one thing with another, nor could we recognize a thing as true unless we first knew the meaning of truth, i. e., unless we remembered it. It is true he gave a wider meaning to memory than St. Thomas did. To Augustine it is the principal ability of man; through it we remember truth, through it the soul knows itself, through it we remember God, and in it are stored the images coming from sensations which are again the source of new knowledge by associations and combinations, but he casts away the interpretation given to memory by Plato. He says, if knowledge would be innate, i. e., nothing but a recollection from a previous existence, the successful questioning of the ignorant upon geometry would imply that all men were geometers in the previous existence, which is evidently false since they are so scarce in this life. It is not because man once knew and has forgotten, i. e., that he has the ideas innate in his soul in a potential state and thus he can make replies to questions, but because "they have in them the light of Eternal Reasons where they see these unchangeable verities."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>St. Augustine, Confessions, x, n. 17.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., x, ch. 15.

<sup>3</sup>St. Augustine, De Trinitate, xii, ch. 15.

When we perceive sensible impressions of numbers, we perceive them within ourselves, because the reason and laws of numbers and dimensions are quite distinct from the lines or sounds by which they are signified.<sup>1</sup>

We shall see that according to him, it is not the ideas which are innate, but the ability of the soul to see them, to produce them by concurring with the Divine Light illuminating, teaching the soul.

We may say, however, that memory for him is the gateway to knowledge, because it receives all the corporeal species from sensations and passes them on to the eye of the mind,<sup>2</sup> ready for thinking.

Every one who thinks of things corporeal, whether he himself imagine anything, or hear, or read, either a narrative of things past, or foretelling things of future, has recourse to his memory and finds there the limits and measure of all the forms at which he gazes in his thoughts.<sup>3</sup>

External things can only be known in the measure in which they participate in truth, and this we can find out only if we compare them to Truth. But in order to do so, we must first know what is truth; otherwise we could not recognize other things as true.

Here we find the most profound depth of memory which is at the foundation of all the wealth of knowledge we gather from the experience of external things. This is where he himself marvels with astonishment at the mystery of the soul which reveals itself in the analysis of memory. It surprises him even, how we can store the remembrances of sensitive knowledge, but at least he can find an explanation for their origin without much difficulty. But

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<sup>1</sup>St. Augustine, Confessions, x, ch. 12.

<sup>2</sup>St. Augustine, De Trinitate, xi, n. 14.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., n. 15.

what lies beyond sensitive memory, and what at the same time gives the whole meaning to knowledge is what mystifies him.

That is still a more hidden depth of memory, wherein we found this (truth) first when we thought of it, and wherein an inner word is begotten such as belongs to no tongue; as it were, knowledge of knowledge, vision of vision, and understanding which had indeed existed in the memory before but was latent there, although itself had also some memory of its own; it would not return to those things which it had left in the memory while it turned to think of other things.<sup>1</sup>

But how do we remember Truth which is the measure of all true knowledge?

With the notion of happiness, he shows that we remember God. A happy life to him is to rejoice in God, but seeing that all men seek a happy life, he concludes therefore that all must seek God. But nothing can be sought unless it is remembered, consequently we must have a remembrance of God.<sup>2</sup>

Again from the notion of truth he argues in the same manner. He sees that everyone wishes to rejoice in truth and avoid deception. Even in following error it is truth one loves and seeks in order to be happy in embracing it. The notion of truth and happiness go hand in hand because knowledge is beatitude to Augustine. Thus having a remembrance of truth, one remembers happiness and that is why we seek truth. But remembering truth and happiness we remember God, because "Where I found truth, there I found my God Who is Truth itself, which from the time I learned have I not forgotten."<sup>3</sup>

This memory of Truth is the ground of all our knowledge, moving the soul towards beatitude in its quest for truth, which if we did not remember in some

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<sup>1</sup>St. Augustine, De Trinitate, xv, n. 40.

<sup>2</sup>St. Augustine, Ibid., x, n.36; xiv, n. 8.

<sup>3</sup>St. Augustine, Confessions, x, ch. xix.

way, we could not even recognize if it confronted us. But because we discern what is true it is proven that truth is in the memory.<sup>1</sup>

Plato in his doctrine of memory taught that the soul remembers the Ideas as a past knowledge, but here also St. Augustine goes a step farther and extends memory to what he calls the memory of the present. This is nothing but the sum total of all our knowledge without thinking of it, all that is present to the mind without being aware of it. This includes the knowledge of God, of essence, of cause and principles. It is a *Conscientia Habituel* of which he remarks, "in some wonderful way, I do not know how, we do not know that we know."<sup>2</sup> This is how the soul remembers itself, i. e., by its perpetual presence to itself. "The mind remembers itself and knows itself through the memory of itself, and because it always remembers, it always knows itself."<sup>3</sup> Now, just as this remembrance the soul has of itself is but the unceasing presence of the soul to itself, so we can say that the memory we have of Truth and God is similarly the eternal presence of God to the soul.

To remember Him is to turn toward His unextinguishable light which strikes our eyes even when we are turned away from that light. Therefore the memory of the soul according to St. Augustine is only a particular case of the omnipresence of God to the things.<sup>4</sup>

But in this particular case, (by His presence to the soul), God is the Teacher of the soul because by revealing Truth to it we can pass judgment upon the truth of external things. "Truth itself is the only teacher"<sup>5</sup> is a repeated

<sup>1</sup>St. Augustine, Confessions, x, ch. xxiv.

<sup>2</sup>St. Augustine, De Trinitate, xiv, n. 9.

<sup>3</sup>St. Augustine, De Trinitate, x, n. 36; xiv, n. 6.

<sup>4</sup>Dr. Leblanc, Course on St. Augustine, fall, 1935.

<sup>5</sup>St. Augustine, Confessions, xi, ch. vii.

dictum of St. Augustine. Even if we seem to teach, it is not we that give enlightenment, but it is the Interior Master, i. e., Truth itself which teaches us. "Truth teaches because God reveals truth in man's own consciousness."<sup>1</sup> This is in harmony with his teaching of memory where God is present to the soul as Truth, therefore, as its Master and its Teacher.

Truth diffuses itself throughout the soul as a light most pure and most intelligible. The outer world arouses the mind, excites ideas, and causes us to enter into ourselves, but what teaches is the inner truth.<sup>2</sup>

We shall see in the following chapters that, according to Augustine just as according to St. Thomas, thinking is always started from the external world, but Augustine emphasizes that we cannot think unless we are reminded of something, but the intervention of sensation is necessary for this; not, however, in the strict sense of Plato. While we can recognize through the platonic approach to knowledge founded on the intuition of Truth, we can also find that there is nothing innate to the soul except the ability to recognize and identify, i. e., to judge of the truth of things in the light of Truth shedding intelligibility upon external things. And as we have seen from the quotation from Dr. LeBlanc that this remembrance of Truth is but the omnipresence of God to things, in the light of this we can understand what St. Augustine means when he presents God as the Interior Master in his De Magistro. But the presence of this Interior Master instructing the soul does not free man from the need of sensitive knowledge, on the contrary, sensations are necessary in order to arouse man and bring him back to that inner light by which he seeks

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<sup>1</sup>St. Augustine, De Magistro, xii, n. 40.

<sup>2</sup>St. Augustine, Confessions, xi, ch. 7, 10, 27.



the reasons of material things. "It is Truth itself that illuminates us internally and makes us see the truth of that to which the master directs our attention."<sup>1</sup> This is why the moral aspect of knowledge is so gravely emphasized by St. Augustine, and this is why he sees it to be necessary that Faith should precede knowledge, because only then can we see things in the light of the inner truth.

In order to consult intelligible things we consult not the exterior voice of him who speaks, but the inner truth that presides within our minds. Yet this inner truth does not reveal itself equally to all, but rather in proportion to the disposition with which they seek it. Wherefore if one err in his judgment let him impute the fault not to the truth that he consults, but to himself; just as we do not blame the light when our eyes are deceived by the reflection.<sup>2</sup>

We have seen in our discussion of faith that its role in knowledge is to secure that disposition by which we can safely advance in our pursuit of truth, now in the light of this last quotation we can see that the wealth and profundity of memory itself is of greater value to man if knowledge is sought with the guidance of Faith, because with that disposition we can see the truth of external things when we consult the inner light.

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<sup>1</sup>St. Augustine, De Magistro, xi, n. 36.

<sup>2</sup>St. Augustine, De Magistro, xi, n. 38.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE RELATION OF THE SOUL TO THE MATERIAL UNIVERSE ACCORDING TO AUGUSTINE

It is important to note that St. Augustine always tries to establish a difference between the two forms of knowledge, i. e., intellectual knowledge concerned with unchangeable, Eternal truths relegated to the world of the Inner Man, and sensible knowledge opposed to this, i. e., opposed to wisdom, and concerned with knowledge gathered from exterior things through experience, always remaining distinct from the purely intellectual. Through the corporeal senses we reach the exterior realities, we know their nature when they are put before us, but what is known by the intellect resides in the interior of the mind.

Now, we may ask the question: what is the reason of sensible knowledge, why do we need it when the soul is in touch with Truth itself by its very nature, and when this Truth is its greatest good?

Let us return for a moment to Augustine's conception of man, i. e., of the soul. We saw that he defines the soul "a reasonable substance made to govern the body", using the body for the obtaining of its sovereign good, and always remaining superior to the body in substance, nevertheless emphasizing that man is an essential unity composed of these two substances. Now if we call attention to the analogy by which Dr. LeBlanc showed the similarity between Truth itself vivifying, animating the soul, and the soul vivifying and

animating the body,<sup>1</sup> we can understand why sensations are necessary. Perfection belongs to the whole man, St. Augustine would not deny that. But this perfection in which the body also has a share is reached through the function of the soul, the soul which plays a part of mediator between Divine Truth and the body. How is this mediation—by which man attains his perfection—fulfilled? The soul is in contact with God, with Eternal Truth by reason of its spiritual nature,<sup>2</sup> but it is united to the body to confer life upon it, to vivify it, so that the body may gradually participate in the perfection of the soul. In order that this participation may be effected, the soul by conferring life upon the body exercises vital functions through its very substance.

Now, we say in our discussion of memory that Truth diffuses itself in the soul through the omnipresence of God, similarly by the perpetual presence of the soul throughout the body, life and operation is conferred upon it. But just as the soul is not always turned to that Truth perpetually present to it, likewise, with regard to sense knowledge, the soul is not always in act to the same degree but according to the nature of the movement considered. Therefore just as we found that there are no innate ideas in intellectual knowledge, there is no innateness in sensation, but the sensible form concurs with the sense producing the sensation.

The role of the soul in the body is to act continually, but the activity of the soul is spontaneous upon the perception of the senses, i. e., when a corporeal movement is not hidden from the attention of the soul, the soul

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<sup>1</sup>Dr. LeBlanc, Course on St. Augustine, fall, 1935.

<sup>2</sup>St. Augustine, Confessions, xi, n. 7.

moves itself to produce its own sensation.<sup>1</sup> This "vital attention" of the soul to external things is the proximate cause of sensation, due to his doctrine that a substance lower in nature cannot exert any causality on a more perfect substance.<sup>2</sup> The soul does not suffer the effect from the body, but causes the effect in it as in its subject.<sup>3</sup>

It seems to me, that when the soul recognizes some sensible thing in the body, it does not suffer from the body, but it becomes more attentive to the bodily modifications, and when these impressions are hidden from the soul's attention is all what is called sensation.<sup>4</sup>

This is evident especially when the body is turned in opposition to the soul, because then the attention becomes greater. Since sensation is the attention of the soul to the various conditions of the body, these acts become known either because they are in harmony with it, or because they are in opposition.

The body has no sensations, but the soul through the body which it uses as a medium, in order that it may cause in itself that which happens on the outside.<sup>5</sup>

### The Process of Sensation

With each sensible knowledge St. Augustine distinguishes:

- 1 The object itself
- 2 The sensitive organ, and
- 3 The intention of the soul, which unites the object with the sense.

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<sup>1</sup> St. Augustine, De Quantit. Animae.

<sup>2</sup> St. Augustine, Gen. ad lit. xii, 16.

<sup>3</sup> St. Augustine, De Musica, vi, n. 9.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., vi, n. 10.

<sup>5</sup> St. Augustine, De Gen. ad lit. xii, n. 51.

The object does not belong to the nature of the living being, but sensation belongs to the nature of the living thing insofar as it is wrought in the body, and through the body in the soul. But the third belongs to the soul only because it is the will.<sup>1</sup> The intervention of the will is necessary in sensation, so that the attention of the soul may not be turned towards them intemperately, but in due subordination to reason.

In man there is another power, i. e., the soul, by which I endow with sense my flesh; which the Lord hath given to me, bidding the eye not to hear and the ear not to see; but that for me to see by, and this for me to hear by; and to each of the other senses its own proper office, which being different, I the single mind do through them govern.<sup>2</sup>

He throws a light upon this threefold aspect involved in sensation with the aid of numbers. The first of numbers is in the object of sensation.<sup>3</sup> Here he speaks of the sensation of sound therefore the number is called "numeri sonates",<sup>4</sup> but this example serves for sensation in general, because what is true of the sensation of sound is true of the other senses.

Thus, when we hear the hymn "Deus creator omnium", it seems that all the numbers are at the same time in the voice, in the sense of hearing, in the sensation of the soul, and also in the memory.<sup>5</sup> But if we investigate it more closely, we must change our opinion, because it is possible that somewhere some kind of voice vibrates the air in such numbers and yet no one hears it.

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<sup>1</sup>St. Augustine, De Trinitate, xi, n. 2-5.

<sup>2</sup>St. Augustine, Confessions, x, ch. xi.

<sup>3</sup>St. Augustine, De Musica, vi, n. 2.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., vi, n. 16.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., vi, n. 2.

If so, then the first species of numbers can exist without the other three.<sup>1</sup> (Note: this is also a proof of Augustine's maintaining the objectivity of knowledge.) Therefore, when we have a sensation of something, the number in the sense differs from the number in the thing; i. e., we can separate the second species of number from the first.<sup>2</sup> This second species of numbers he calls "numeri occusores"<sup>3</sup> and that there is such thing he proves by arguing that we can recite a poem more slowly, or rapidly, and while the meter in the poem would remain the same, the impression on the ear would be according to the slowness or the rapidness of the recitation, because the second number is the measure of the preceding one and therefore distinct from it. "This impression does not increase or decrease, because it is the measure of the sound which generated it."<sup>4</sup> It is similar to an impression in water which is not formed before we put the thing in it, nor does it remain after we take it out, and yet the object in the water is distinct from its impression. Likewise, the number of the sense and the number of the object are distinct from one another.

The third condition(number) of sensation is in the intention of the will, i. e., the cooperation of the soul itself. The numbers existing here are also distinct from the preceding ones, which is proved by the fact that we can call them into being only by thinking of them, and it is not necessary to reveal them by sound or any other way.<sup>5</sup> Now, bodily images pass from the sense to

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., vi, n. 2.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., vi, n. 3.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., vi, n. 16.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., vi, n. 3.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., vi, n. 4.

the memory and the same process results within, and again we can distinguish three things, i. e., the memory, an internal seeing, and the will itself.<sup>1</sup> St. Augustine observes two trinities in the process of thinking; the one in perceptual vision, and the other in "internal vision". By his distinction of numbers in sensation he shows the divers natures between the object, the act of seeing, and the will, i. e., the attention of the soul which keeps the sense with the object seen, so long as it is seen. The organ of sense is nothing but a corporeal instrument; sensation, which is that sense informed, is also material, but that which connects both sense and object is immaterial because it is the will itself.<sup>2</sup>

Plotinus held a similar theory of sensation, because according to him as according to St. Augustine the lower in the hierarchy of being cannot act upon what is superior to it.<sup>3</sup> Material bodies therefore cannot act upon the soul of man, but only on his body where they produce a certain modification. Now the soul being an immediately active principle ever present to the body with its attention, moves itself in harmony with those bodily modifications, and sensation consists in that. When those bodily modifications do not escape the attention of the soul, or the soul does not ignore them, sensation is the result, because by the act of turning itself towards them the soul produces its own sensation. The external object does not produce therefore external sensation, nor the image which results from it, but the soul itself produces them, while using the organs of sense to perceive what is external.

<sup>1</sup>St. Augustine, De Trinitate, xi, n. 6.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., xi, ii, n. 2.

<sup>3</sup>Plotinus, Enneads, iii, n. 6.

Knowledge therefore cannot be the result of the action of sensible things on the soul. Sense perception cannot be the cause of something in a higher order of being, but it has its function in preparing the way for it. Knowledge proper, the apprehension of truth which is Eternal and Immutable, cannot be caused by the perception of bodies which are mutable and transitory.

Here we must return to man as a moral being in order to understand that peculiar role of sensation in a theory of knowledge where the perfection attained by knowledge is at the same time a moral perfection. Because it is the will which regulates the movements of the soul, and upon the act of the will turning the soul to this or that object the soul spontaneously generates its knowledge through its very substance, the soul can be degraded or perfected according to the nature of the object towards which it habituates itself, and according to which either it moves towards the Ultimate End or recedes from it. Thus while separating sensitive knowledge on one hand from the intellectual because of its inferior nature, he unites the two by virtue of the Ultimate End of man. Sensitive knowledge is good and is necessary for man, but it must be exercised in due subordination to intellectual knowledge. Properly exercised, the two are not completely separated. But a true separation is maintained indeed, when the will refrains from turning towards sensation in that proper subordination imposed by the requirements of the Ultimate End of man.

The purpose of the will and of true knowledge is to see. This seeing ultimately results in the Beatific vision in the life to come, but in this life the end of the will is to lead man to the knowledge of the greatest good as much as possible. But correct thinking, or true knowledge is dependent



upon two things: first, we must not desire corporeal things too ardently if they are pleasing to us; second, nor should we draw away from them if they are unpleasant. The role of a good will is to bring the two into harmony, i. e., to enjoy the pleasant and suffer the unpleasant in due proportion measured by the requirements of the Inner Truth.

To judge of them correctly we must refer them to Eternal Truth. If the will loves the Truth residing in the soul more than the corporeal things, it is a good will, but in the opposite case, it is evil.<sup>1</sup>

Thus we see, that this Inner Truth, while being the measure of the truth of our judgments guiding us from error if we are turned towards its light with Faith in our heart in the Word of God, is the measure of the good of our acts in the same sense.

When St. Augustine speaks of the senses as being evil and an impediment to knowledge we must understand it in this sense only when it is not governed by a good will, only when they are not referred to the Inner Light. "The senses are an impediment in the soul's ascent to that higher Light, which Light does not disclose itself to one burdened with desire for sensible things.<sup>2</sup> And this is what he means by saying that the senses are a hindrance to understanding;<sup>3</sup> and that we must resist them and acquire a habit of doing without them.<sup>4</sup> Acting spontaneously through its very being, when turned towards bodily things, the soul acquires a "feebleness through its intimacy with corporeal things",<sup>5</sup> because it becomes habituated towards them, and then it is

<sup>1</sup>St. Augustine, De Trinitate, xi, n. 7-13.

<sup>2</sup>St. Augustine, Soliloques, ii, xlv, 24.

<sup>3</sup>St. Augustine, De Trinitate, xi, ch. 1.

<sup>4</sup>St. Augustine, Letters, p. 8.

<sup>5</sup>St. Augustine, De Trinitate, xi, ch. 1, 1.

hard to withdraw from them.

We are so familiarly occupied with bodies, and our thought has projected itself outwardly with so wonderful a proclivity towards bodies, that when it has been withdrawn from the uncertainty of things corporeal, that it may be fixed with a much more certain and stable knowledge in that which is spirit, it flies back to those bodies, and seeks rest there whence it has drawn weakness.<sup>1</sup>

It is not according to the essence of the soul to pursue corporeal things by reason of its union with the body. This union has a purpose because we can draw greater moral good through it, if the soul is so habituated that it governs the body properly.

In themselves, the senses would not be of any use to man, because they are but a source of error,<sup>2</sup> and that is why sensible knowledge has to be judged in the light of intelligible Truth.<sup>3</sup> Thus, accordingly as the soul turns to the consideration of earthly things or things Eternal, St. Augustine distinguishes an Inferior and a Superior Reason. Science is relegated to the first, and Wisdom to the second. The soul has a twofold activity: on the one side it moves in the realm of Intelligible Truth, and on the other it is in touch with the senses so that it may guide them according to higher truths and rule them. If the senses are informed, judgment may approve of it, but that judgment may act, is due to the senses. In themselves being inadequate we must judge of sensations. We rise from the senses to scientific knowledge by the same process of judging the data in the light of Eternal Truth.

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<sup>1</sup>St. Augustine, De Trinitate, xi, ch. 1, 1.

<sup>2</sup>St. Augustine, Soliloques, II, iv, 5; II, vi, 12.

<sup>3</sup>St. Augustine, De Gen. ad litt. xii, 25, 52.

Wherefore it seems to me that one can sooner swim on dry land than perceive geometrical truths by the senses, although in learning the rudiments they are of some use.<sup>1</sup>

It is evident from the foregoing that St. Augustine sees the need of sensible knowledge owing to our corporeal life, and the need of the soul for a corporeal attachment so that it may derive its greatest good through imposing measure upon that which is below its essence in the light of that which is above it. Looking for sensation in the Augustinian theory of knowledge it is impossible to leave out the moral implications which permeate his whole philosophical speculations, and which come to light most pronouncedly with the problem of sensible knowledge.

The task of exposing the doctrine of St. Thomas will be less involved. Moving in the Aristotelian world of realities the soul can find its object in proportion to the powers with which it is endowed in order that it may attain its perfection through them. We do not need to devote space to seek the implications of his speculations because his explanations are clear and complete regarding sense knowledge, as well as to the intellectual.

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<sup>1</sup>St. Augustine, Soliloques, I, iv, 9.

## CHAPTER V

### THE RELATION OF THE SOUL TO THE MATERIAL WORLD ACCORDING TO ST. THOMAS

Comparing the doctrine of St. Thomas to that of St. Augustine on sensible knowledge, the first thing we note is that following upon his Aristotelian conception of the nature of the soul as the first act of the substance man, i. e., its substantial form, the soul has not per se operations of its own, but is likened to operation as potentia to act.<sup>1</sup> We saw that St. Augustine conceived the soul as the active principle and the subject of all its operations, whereby it belongs to the very essence of the soul to be active; hence the direction of action is from the soul towards the external world. Faithful to his other principle, that causality can be exerted by a superior substance on its inferior and not contrariwise, Augustine puts the soul into an active relation with the world.

Contrary to this, St. Thomas proves that it is impossible for the soul to operate through its essence immediately, although by essence the soul is an act, but it is not always actual with respect to operation, therefore, it is necessary that it is in potentiality in regard to it. But since by essence the soul is act, it cannot also be in potentiality by reason of its essence, hence something else is needed by which the soul is in potentia with respect

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<sup>1</sup> St. Thomas, Summa, I, qu. 75, art. 3.

to movement. "But that which is act by essence cannot be in potentiality by reason of an act as act; therefore the soul operates through its powers which are its accidents."<sup>1</sup> By virtue of the form, man is constituted in his essence but is in potentia to further acts, for the accomplishment of which various powers are needed.<sup>2</sup> There is no direct causality exercised by the soul in sensation nor in intellectual knowledge, but the soul remains principle quod remote of the operation, since the whole office of the soul is to be the form of man, and it is to man to whom operation belongs simpliciter or principle quod.

The action of anything composed of matter and form belongs not to the matter alone, nor to the form alone but to the composite; because to act belongs to that which has being, and since being belongs to the composite through its form, likewise the composite acts through its form.<sup>3</sup>

The human soul is not a "hoc aliquid", not a complete being but a part of a thing,<sup>4</sup> and its union with matter is to its advantage because it renders the soul receptive of perfections which are obtainable only through its communication with the external world. But in this communication the first causality comes from the external world. Indeed St. Thomas would not maintain that an immediate communication could take place between the material world and the spiritual soul; no, in that sense the material world could not exert its causality upon the soul; but as mediated by the powers which are adapted to receive various forms from the material world the soul can be moved to the

<sup>1</sup>St. Thomas, Summa, I, qu. 77, art. 1.

<sup>2</sup>St. Thomas, Contra Gentiles, II, ch. 72.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., II, ch. 50.

<sup>4</sup>St. Thomas, Quaest. Disp. qu. 1 ad 3um.

cognition of external objects.

The extrinsic world holds a relation to the soul by the natural aptitude of things to be united to the soul, which St. Thomas calls the Intentional aptitude—distinct from the aptitude of things in reference to natural change—consisting in the capacity of the things to be known. That there may be knowledge, sensible or intellectual, it is necessary to have this intentional order, and this in a twofold manner. The first is that relation by which natural things can be united to the soul in some way, and the second relation consists in the capacity of things to be "in" the soul. This is why we need two kinds of powers, i. e., the sensitive related to the less common object, to the sensible body, and the Intellectual powers related to the most common object, i. e., universal being.<sup>1</sup>

The soul abounds in powers according to the number of movements and objects which are needed for the attainment of its perfection. St. Thomas distinguishes five genera of powers, of which we shall consider only the genus of sensitive and intellectual powers in their relation to the external world and the steps necessary to complete understanding.

Compared to the external world, the soul is like a clean tablet upon which nothing has been written, and it has to gather all its knowledge step by step from sensible impressions. The first condition in the first step of knowledge is that there is an actually sensible external world, and that there are capacities to receive this external world in its various aspects of sensibility. The senses being passive powers must be determined to act by an exterior cause.

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<sup>1</sup>St. Thomas, Summa, I, qu. 78, art. 1.

more so, the diversity of these exterior causes diversity in the nature of the sensible powers.<sup>1</sup> Color determines sight, sound specifies hearing and so on. Thus we see that the soul is not a mover and an agent in sensing; but through its powers it is that by which a patient is passive. The mover is the exterior sensible without which man cannot have sensations.<sup>2</sup> Being a passive potency adopted to experience some external sensible, the senses need to be stimulated by the external sensible, and that is what the sense perceives per se. What takes place in sensation St. Thomas shows by distinguishing between natural and spiritual immutation.<sup>3</sup> To the first order of immutation belong substantial change, where the forms are received in a natural way, and the second order, i. e., the intentional order includes changes effected through the reception of intentional forms in cognition.

Change can only take place by the reception of a form, and if a form is received in a natural way a thing becomes something else; but if a form is received in a spiritual way, a thing becomes known. By the former, i. e., by natural immutation, a capacity receives an act in its physical entity, but psychically, or intentionally, or immaterially, or objectively, he speaks of an act receiving a further act, where the subject is actual, and where the reception of the form is not a mere passive union, but is operative and active. The cognitive faculty is called passive because it does not change its object but is changed by it, because it becomes the object insofar as it knows it. This change is a vital operation generated by the cognitive faculty, an im-

<sup>2</sup> St. Thomas, Contra Gentiles, II, ch. 57.

<sup>3</sup> St. Thomas, Summa, I, qu. 78, art. 2.

<sup>1</sup> St. Thomas, Summa, I, qu. 78, art. 3.

manent act, which has its terminus in the perfection of the patient. St. Thomas calls this kind of change spiritual, because in order to receive forms in cognition the subject must in some sense be immaterial, although in sensible cognition the object is wholly material. Fundamentally, the principle of sensation and of intelligence is the same in man, i. e., the soul is that spiritual principle enabling man to receive forms in the cognitive order, be it of sensitive or intellectual knowledge, by being the principle sustaining powers as adequate instruments for its own perfection. Thus the soul moves itself as having been moved by the powers when an object acts upon them.

While St. Augustine places the cause of the entire movement in the activity of the soul in the process of sensation, St. Thomas finds the causality in the virtue of the form derived from the object. St. Augustine sees that the external senses are necessary so that the soul may move itself this way or the other, without any causal activity however flowing from the body to the soul necessitating it to this or that sensation; and this is where we find that he admits an intervention of the will in sensible perception by turning the attention of the soul to various external modifications. For St. Thomas, however, activity follows upon a form received, and before the form imparts an act to the soul through the appointed powers, the soul cannot move because it is in potentia in that respect. Therefore the operation of the senses follows upon the causality exerted upon them by external objects, spontaneously and necessarily.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>St. Thomas, Contra Gentiles, II, ch. 30.



Things in nature are actually sensible, thus when the vibration of sound reaches the passive sense the first act is the sensible form, i. e., the sensible quality of the external thing, from which the power derives its mover. The sensible form considered as the mover of the sense is called the Sensible Species, and by it the sensitive subject is joined to the sensible object so that the two become one in the act of sensation.

The first step in sensation therefore is the informing of the sense by the Sensible Species when an external sensible has acted upon the power, and in the union of the two we find the spontaneous activity of the soul moving as being determined to a certain kind of movement. To each external sense, i. e., to proper sense, belongs to know the sensible by which it is immuted,<sup>1</sup> e.g., when the eye is immuted by color; but this is not yet the perception of the act of vision. This St. Thomas refers to the internal sense (common sense), which by another immutation perceives the vision. This he calls the "common root and principle of the exterior senses",<sup>2</sup> because from there everything that is received from the external senses is referred to the intellect,<sup>3</sup> in order to be cognizant of the nature of the object.

He distinguishes four interior senses or powers besides the five proper senses, namely: common sense, memory, imagination or phantasm, and the cognitive power or particular reason;<sup>4</sup> each having a distinct office in the pro-

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<sup>1</sup>St. Thomas, Summa, I, qu. 78, art. 4 ad 2um.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., art. 4 ad 1um.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., art. 3.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., art. 4.

cess of the perfection of knowledge. We may leave, however, the particular discussion of each power and remain with that phase of St. Thomas' doctrine which characterizes his Aristotelianism. So far we have noticed, that with the notions of Potentia and Act, he makes clear that the soul cannot be immediately operative, and since man is in potentia to movement and perfection he must receive acts by way of his powers.

In the order of knowledge, the first act is derived from the material world by corporeal powers receiving individual species in corporeal organs,<sup>1</sup> but the senses do not extend beyond things corporeal since their proper object can only be found in material things. Without their objects, however, the senses know nothing,<sup>2</sup> therefore, the active presence of an external sensible is necessary in order that natural knowledge take place.

Looking at intentional species in general, regardless whether sensible or intelligible, St. Thomas remarks that:

It is the likeness of the very essence of a thing, and in a way it is the very essence and nature of the thing with regard to its intentional existence, not with regard to its natural existence as it exists in things.<sup>3</sup>

But such intentional form can be considered in two ways:

First, as it is in the subject, and second, with respect to the relation which it has to the thing whose likeness it is. Considered in the first way, it makes the subject actually know, and considered in the second, it determines this knowledge to be the knowledge of some determinate object.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>St. Thomas, Contra Gent., II, ch. 66.

<sup>2</sup>St. Thomas, Ibid., II, ch. 66.

<sup>3</sup>St. Thomas, Quod lib., VIII, art. 4.

<sup>4</sup>St. Thomas, De Veritate, X, art. 4.

Now, in order that knowledge take place either in the order of sensation or of intelligence, it is necessary that the likeness of the thing known be in the knower, and this by way of the sensible or the intelligible species which informs the proper potency to reduce it to a certain act, i. e., to complete it in the act of sensation or of intelligence. The species being the likeness of the thing either in the sensible or in the intelligible order, actuates the soul accordingly. But the species cannot be the direct object of sensation or of intellection, since the soul being only potential in regard to knowledge must be actuated or informed by the object (sensible or intelligible) in order to become the proximate principle of knowing. The soul is the material (potential) in regard to knowledge, and is, when informed sensitively, the actual principle (actus primus) of sensitive cognition; when informed intellectually, the actual principle of intellectual knowledge. The soul therefore in a sense (as informed) is the cause of knowledge because it moves itself to know, but as knowing in actu primo, or as being the proximate potentia of knowledge the soul is caused by the object, i. e., we become the thing we know.

At this point, reflecting upon St. Thomas' conception of cause will make clear that knowledge while being a thing "in" the knower, has an external relation to its object. An agent produces its like as regards the form whereby it acts,<sup>1</sup> but the form of the agent is received in the effect sometimes in a different mode of being than it has in the agent, because "Whatever is received is received according to the mode of the recipient."

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<sup>1</sup>St. Thomas, Contra Gentiles, II, ch. xlvi.

While the mode of the existence of the effect is determined by the mode of the potency in which the effect is produced, the very existence of the effect is dependent upon the **cause** which gave of its own actuality, moving the power to its operation by the virtue of the form received. Since material things are actually sensible, they are sufficient to exert a causality by presenting themselves to the senses in this or that formal aspect; having a perfection in the scale of material reality they are sufficient in themselves to exercise an efficiency in that proportion.

Considered as efficient causes, sensibles remain external to sensation and are compared to the formal and material causes as First Principles; but the formal aspect under which the sensible is presented to the sense becomes intrinsic to the effect or to sensation by determining the receptive potency to a certain act, and thus constituting the very essence of the act.

Since every agent produces its like, the effect must resemble its cause in some respect; but likeness is a kind of relation because we can refer the thing to its like, hence we can refer a sensation to its efficient cause and see the relation to an externally existing thing; we can refer it also to its formal cause, and see the reason of the kind of sensation; we can again refer the act to the material cause and see the reason of the mode of the existence of the effect. And lastly, considering sensation in its end, we come to that perfection of man which is at the gateway of human knowledge.

### The Phantasm

St. Thomas says, experience shows that we need the senses to have any kind of knowledge at all; they are needed as a step towards understanding.

There is no knowledge in the soul unless by way of the senses.<sup>1</sup> Intelligible being and its fundamental principles can only be detected in the obscurity of things perceived by the senses. We see from our observation of things that sensations lead to memories, and these lead us to take observation of things whereby we arrive at the understanding of universal principles of sciences and of art.<sup>2</sup>

On page 38 we mentioned that the acts of the external senses are referred to the common sense as its object, or to the production of the phantasm, which is a sensible image of the external thing, and is generated spontaneously with every act of perception.

St. Thomas says that the phantasm is necessary in our ascent to intellectual knowledge, because "the phantasm is to the intellect what color is to sight."<sup>3</sup> He cautions, however, that the phantasm is necessary not as an agent disposing the intellect to perceive intelligible truth, because in that case the relation would not be the same between them as between color and sight. The Platonic error consisted in maintaining that the senses are needed accidentally as it were, inciting, predisposing the intellect to know.<sup>4</sup> Contrary to this, the phantasms are needed according to St. Thomas, because the likenesses of things are found there, which likenesses determine our intellect to an act of understanding, i. e., the form which is received by the intellect is found in a manner in the phantasm, therefore the body is needed for the action

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<sup>1</sup>St. Thomas, Summa, I, qu. 79, art. 6.

<sup>2</sup>St. Thomas, Contra Gent., II, ch. 83.

<sup>3</sup>St. Thomas, Summa, I, qu. 73, art 3 ad 3um.

<sup>4</sup>St. Thomas, Contra Gent., II, ch. 76.

of the intellect not as its organ of action but on the part of the object.<sup>1</sup>

During its union with the body the proper object of the intellect is the quiddity or nature existing in corporeal matter, and through such natures of visible things only can the intellect rise to the knowledge of things invisible. But it belongs to the nature of visible things to exist in an individual, consequently in matter; therefore, these natures cannot be known unless we first apprehend them through the senses and the imagination.

To understand its proper object, therefore, the intellect must be necessarily turned to the phantasm in order to rise to the understanding of the universal natures existing in the individuals. The body, therefore, is necessary for the action of the intellect on the part of the object, because the intellect first of all is directed to the nature of things apprehended by the senses, and from there it proceeds to acquire knowledge of the purely immaterial.<sup>2</sup>

The power of knowledge is proportioned to the thing known, but since during its union with the body the pure intelligibles are not the proper object of our intelligence, it must be proportioned to the natures existing in matter. But since intelligibility and immateriality are convertible, in so far as these natures exist in matter they are not in themselves intelligible.

If the intelligibles in proportion to the power of our understanding would in themselves be intelligible, it would follow that the higher a thing would be on the scale of intelligibility the more we would understand it. But this

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<sup>1</sup>St. Thomas, Summa, I, qu. 75, art. 3.

<sup>2</sup>St. Thomas, De Veritate, qu. 15, art. 1.

is evidently false, because observation teaches us that the nearer things are to our senses the more easily we understand them, although in themselves they are less intelligible.

Thus quoting the authority of Aristotle, St. Thomas concludes that things which are intelligible to us are not intelligible in themselves, but our intelligibles are made from our sensibles.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>St. Thomas, Cont. Gent. II, ch. 77.

## CHAPTER VI

### INTELLECTUAL KNOWLEDGE ACCORDING TO ST. THOMAS

The intellect, like all the powers of the soul, is distinct from the soul<sup>1</sup> and the relation we find between the sensitive powers and their object, i. e., the relation of a potency to its act. St. Thomas shows this with an analogy. Just as prime matter is pure potentia in regard to being, i. e., to existence, so is the human intellect a pure potentia in regard to being, i. e., to knowledge.<sup>2</sup> And just as prime matter is perfected by forms received in the natural order, so is the intellect perfected by forms received in the intentional order. In both cases we find a relation to being, but in a different order. In both cases we find a pure potency to receive forms, which in the first case is a capacity to become all things in the natural order, and in the latter is a capacity to become all things in the order of knowledge.

Following upon the authority of Dionysius he shows that man by his capacity to receive forms in the intentional order is in a certain sense all things (potentially). "Beings that have knowledge are more like to God, since all things pre-exist in God, but in beings with knowledge, things after-exist in the mind."<sup>3</sup> This after existing takes place by a gradual reduction of the

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<sup>1</sup>St. Thomas, Summa, I, qu. 79, art. 1; Contra Gent., II, ch. 61.

<sup>2</sup>St. Thomas, Summa, I, qu. 79, art. 1.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., qu. 80, art. 1.



of the potency to act, but since the intellect is in potentia to universal being, it can become all things. Since everything is a possible object of thought, it is necessary that the mind is a potentiality similar to its object without being its object, therefore besides being a capacity, the intellect cannot have any other nature of its own. "Before the mind thinks, it is not any real thing." (Arist. De Anima, III, ch. 4, 429.) "The likenesses of things are not in the soul actually, but only potentially."<sup>1</sup> Just as it belongs to the nature of being to be intelligible, it belongs to the nature of the intellect to have a capacity for the intelligible. By acquiring knowledge, the intellect acquires being by assimilating itself to the things known, and thus participating in the intelligible.

Being is known naturally by the intellect whenever it knows anything. Although the ontological validity of this concept cannot be demonstrated because it is immediately evident, everything known by the intellect is comprised under the aspect of being. All the self evident truths are based on this notion, and these are the only truths known naturally by our intellect, i. e., with its being each creature received its intelligibility or the ontological truth of its being, and the intelligent soul received with its being an aptitude for the recognition of those truths when they are presented to it; and that is what St. Thomas means by the natural knowledge of the intellect.

However, even the knowledge of first principles must be received through the perception of sensibles,<sup>2</sup> because the simple apprehension of the intelli-

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., qu. 75, art. 2.

<sup>2</sup>St. Thomas, Contra Gent., II, ch. 83.

ligible is in the sensible.<sup>1</sup> First, the intellect acquires a knowledge of the essences of sensible things in a confused manner, expressing it by the general notion of being which is derived when the first concrete object presents itself to our cognition.<sup>2</sup> This first knowledge is an imperfect intuition of being, which is necessary, however, in order to arrive at a distinct knowledge of the essences of things.

The first principles of knowledge are derived by this simple acknowledgment of our intellect upon the presence of being, and conclusions can only be derived through the use of these principles.

But how can the intellect get hold of such abstract notions when nothing but the concrete comes through the senses, puzzled epistemologists up to our days, and caused many of them to fall into materialism. St. Thomas bridges this gap with his Intellectus Agens as we shall see later.

We saw that the intellect has a potentiality to receive intelligible forms, and that in this life the proper object of the intellect is the essence of material things, but forms existing in matter are not actually intelligible<sup>3</sup> and the phantasm being an organic power presents an image therefore in a manner not intelligible. "The phantasm being an organic power while it presents them with their material characteristics, therefore only potentially intelligible."<sup>4</sup> Let us see how St. Thomas solves this double aspect of potentiality,

<sup>1</sup>St. Thomas, De Veritate, qu. 14, art. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., qu. 1, art. 1.

<sup>3</sup>St. Thomas, Summa, I, qu. 79, art. 1.

<sup>4</sup>St. Thomas, Contra Gent., II, ch. 76.

i. e., on the side of the intellect which is only potentially intelligent, and on the side of the object which is potentially intelligible, i. e., an object in potentia only.

The nature of every mover includes a principle sufficient for its natural operation; if the operation is that of passion, a passive principle; if the operation is of action, an active principle. Man is the most perfect mover among lower movers, and his proper operation is to understand, which is not accomplished without some passion, in so far as the intellect is receptive of intelligibles; nor is it accomplished without action in so far as the intellect makes things actually intelligible, therefore, the respective principles of both must be in the soul of man.<sup>1</sup> All natural things possess sufficient powers for their natural operations, but intelligence is the operation most proper to man; hence he says, Aristotle recognized (Metaph. 7) that the human soul is not less perfectly equipped for understanding than the lower things of nature are equipped for their proper operations.<sup>2</sup> Thus if man did not have a power to make things intelligible, intelligence would not be a natural operation of man, because the things that are presented for his understanding are not in themselves intelligible. Then the fact that he does understand them would have to be explained by a Divine intervention which makes things intelligible for man's understanding. But if man would be deprived of this natural perfection, the term rational animal would not suit his essence. Therefore St. Thomas postulates the Acting Intellect as the agent producing the

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<sup>1</sup>St. Thomas, Contra Gent., II, ch. 76.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., II, ch. 76.

intelligible in proportion to the human intellect, and which agent is a natural equipment of the rational soul.

Let us consider this double relation of the intellect to its object. We stated before that the relation of the intellectual power to its object is in "some way" the same as that of the sensitive potencies, i. e., the intellect ~~is~~ in potentia to its species just as the sense. But the difference consists in this: while the sensible powers find their object in act, the intelligence in order to receive an act must first produce that act, it must make its own intelligible species from the image presented in the phantasm.

The relation of the intellect to its object, therefore, is twofold; the active power is compared to it as act to potentia, because the object as presented in the phantasm is an object in potentia only, and an active power is needed to make it an actual object. The passive power of the intellect on the contrary is compared to its object as a being in potentiality to a being in act,<sup>1</sup> because once the object is rendered actually intelligible the intellect can receive it as its intelligible species.

This distinction between the two powers of the intellect is not by reason of the object, nor by any difference in being—because the common ratio of the object is being—and therefore is the same, but is by reason of the relation in which these powers regard the same object; because the power which makes the object to be in act must be distinct from the power which is moved by the object in act.<sup>2</sup> That there is such twofold power in the intellect St. Thomas

<sup>1</sup>St. Thomas, Summa, I, qu. 79, art. 7.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., qu. 79, art. 7.

finds from the fact that sometimes it is actually understanding and sometimes potentially, therefore, there is something in it by way of matter, i. e., a potentiality to all intelligibles called passive intellect, and something by way of an efficient cause which makes all things actually intelligible, and is called the Acting Intellect.<sup>1</sup>

It is not impossible for the same substance to be in one way in potentiality to intelligibles and the other way to be in act regarding them, because the relation is different in each case. Being an immaterial substance the human soul is intellectual by nature, but is not determined to the likeness of any certain thing, and since knowledge results from the likeness of the thing known being in the knower, the intellect remains in potentia to the determinate likenesses of things, i. e., it has to be determined to know this or that object.

The potentia the intellect has to the likenesses of things presented by the phantasm, is not according to the same mode in which they are there, but as these images are raised to something higher by being disengaged from the individualizing conditions of matter, as being raised to the scale of intelligibility. The cognizable object must always be in proportion to the cognitive faculty. If this power like the senses is dependent on some corporeal organ, it can have knowledge only of what is material and sensible, precisely insofar as it is material and sensible. But if the power is like the human intellect intrinsically independent of any bodily organ, but is nevertheless united with the sensitive powers, its proper object is intelligible being as existing in

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<sup>1</sup> St. Thomas, Contra Gent., II, ch. 59.

sensible and individual matter, but not precisely as existing in such matter.<sup>1</sup> To know what exists in sensible and individual matter but not just as existing in such matter, is to abstract the immaterial from the sensible. St. Thomas says the word Intelligence signifies a certain intimate knowledge; etymologically, the word is a derivation from "intus legere" which means to read within.<sup>2</sup>

The phantasm offers determinate likenesses of sensible things, but these are not presented in an intelligible manner; however, it is possible to conceive the universal nature in these images, apart from the individualizing conditions, therefore

they are determinate images actually, but immaterial potentially. On the other hand, the intellect is immaterial hence of an intellectual nature actually, but it understands, or is determined only potentially. Thus we can see the need of the twofold power in the soul, namely, the active and the possible intellect.<sup>3</sup>

Without the supposition of the acting intellect, abstract knowledge as something natural to man would not be explainable. It would remain a mystery whence the universal character revealed in our ideas, when on the one hand we find the material world where everything is individual, and on the other hand a power which must receive everything through the communication with the material world. But because the intelligible in proportion to our intellect does not exist without matter, we must have a power ready at hand to produce its own intelligible from the particular images of things. In order therefore

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<sup>1</sup> St. Thomas, Summa, I, qu. 85, art. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., II-II, qu. 8, art. 1.

<sup>3</sup> St. Thomas, Contra Gent., II, ch. 77.

that we may attribute the production of ideas to man, we must conclude that there is a principle formally inherent in him and ordained to the transforming of natures found in the phantasm to a mode like itself, i. e., to be immaterial.<sup>1</sup>

Immateriality and intelligibility are synonymous to St. Thomas. A thing is intelligible in so far as it is immaterial, thus if the Acting Intellect abstracts the essences of material things and renders them thereby immaterial, it renders them at the same time intelligible. Elevated to this higher mode of existence the likenesses of things are common to the mode of existence of the intellect, therefore they can be received into it.

We found in our discussion of sensible knowledge that sensible forms are received according to the mode of the sense and not according to the mode of the concrete object. The same principle must be true of the intellect, therefore on account of the excellence of the intellect the forms received by it must be raised to that mode; i. e., the essences of material things are received under the condition of immateriality. And further we found that the sense in act is the sensible in act; likewise in the order of intelligence the intellect in act and the intelligible in act are one. In order to know a thing, it must be united to the intelligence. But since we saw that the intellect in potentia and the intelligible in potentia cannot by itself become one, we must agree with St. Thomas that the Acting Intellect is the first principle of our knowledge.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>St. Thomas, Contra Gent., II, ch. 76.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., II, ch. 76.

As they exist in the phantasm, the species cannot become one with the intellect. Just as for colors which exist outside the soul in order to move the sight, the presence of light is necessary; likewise we need a light to shed intelligibility upon the phantasm in order to move our understanding. For this reason Aristotle called the Acting Intellect "a habit which is a light", and St. Thomas, following his authority, likens it to a light also,<sup>1</sup> through the activity of which the intelligible species are formed from the phantasm, in order to illuminate the possible intellect determining it thereby to an act of understanding.

St. Thomas finds a proportionality between the two powers; the one is endowed with the power to produce what is required by the other for its understanding,<sup>2</sup> and what is produced by the acting intellect is the mover of the possible intellect; moving it by becoming one with it in the act of understanding.

When the possible intellect is in potentia to intelligibles it does not understand, but it understands when it has them actually, because the intellect becomes actual by becoming the intelligibles.<sup>3</sup>

St. Thomas cautions that this union of intelligible and intellect does not imply that it is the intellect which we understand and he takes Aristotle's authority to show that while the thing understood and the intellect are one, it is not the intellect but the object which is understood.

For as sense in act is the sensible in act by reason of the likeness which is the form of the sense in act,

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., II, ch. 59.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., II, ch. 76.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., II, ch. 78.



so likewise the intellect in act, by reason of the likeness of the thing understood which is the form of the intellect in act. So the human intellect which becomes actual by the species of the object understood, is itself understood by the same species as by its form.<sup>1</sup>

I. e., instead of knowing the intellect itself in this union of object and power, we know the object, and we can know the intellect only through an intelligible species, i. e., by making it an object and not directly.

In summary we may say that for the production of the impressed species by which the possible intellect is constituted in its first act, during the state of union of body and soul, a twofold cause is required; the intellectus agens and the phantasm. Since the intellect by which we perceive abstract essences is potential, we distinguish in it two things: namely, the possible intellect--the intellect strictly speaking which is an inorganic potentia formally intellective--and which by the impressed species constituted in first act elicits intellection; and second, the intellectus agens, called intellect analogically or improperly, which is an inorganic abstractive power not formally intellective, and which produces from the phantasm an impressed species in the possible intellect, by which the possible intellect is made intelligent in actu primo. The Acting Intellect is a spiritual light, manifesting to the possible intellect being and its modes or quiddities. It is called "agens" because it is always in act, and in that it is opposed to the possible intellect which requires completion of first act by the impressed species. It is called "light", because just as corporeal light enables bodies to appear to

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<sup>1</sup>St. Thomas, Summa, I, qu. 87, art. 1 ad 3um.

the vision, likewise this spiritual light enables the quiddity of material things from the phantasm to illuminate the possible intellect. The process is called abstraction, because by it the intelligible species is produced by abstracting it from its individuating conditions.

In production of the intelligible species, the phantasm is a true cause, not co-ordinate but subordinated to the Intellectus Agens as its instrument, and this is not by a mere extrinsic assistance but by an intrinsic elevation or promotion because it receives in itself a spiritual force, which force however is not permanent in it. It is a transient participation of the virtue of the principle agent.

The phantasm is a unique instrument which does not operate by its own power any dispositive way on the possible intellect, but only modifies as a material cause the action of the Intellectus agens. That the phantasm is a real cause in understanding is seen, because as St. Thomas says, in the reception by which the possible intellect receives the species of things from the phantasm, the phantasm is an instrumental cause and secondary, and the acting intellect is principle agent and primary, and therefore the effect of the action left in the possible intellect is in accordance with the condition of each one and not according to the condition of one only.<sup>1</sup>

Having been constituted in first act by the intelligible species impressed, the possible intellect moves itself to its second act, i. e., by producing the expressed species the generation of the idea is completed.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>St. Thomas, De Veritate, qu. 10, art. 6.

<sup>2</sup>St. Thomas, Summa, I, qu. 79, art. 3; De Veritate, 8, art. 6; Quaest. Disp. de Anima, qu. 1, art. 4.

Every agent acts in so far as it is in act and not in so far as it is in potentia; therefore, since before receiving the impressed species the intellect is not a thing in act, it cannot move to understanding. In the strict sense it must receive being from the species abstracted from the phantasm before it can act by itself.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, for every act of ideation the intellect must be moved by the intelligible species to constitute it in act, so that it can move itself to the expression of the Idea. Without the instrumentality of the phantasm, or without the dependence on the senses therefore thinking would be impossible during our corporeal existence.

The reason why intelligibles in themselves are not intelligible to us<sup>is</sup>, because we cannot have phantasms of them; thus in order to know something of them we must use comparison with things that can be presented thus, because the process of abstraction which is the process of ideation requires it.<sup>2</sup> Neither can the intellect turn to the consideration of ideas already received and retained in the memory without calling the instrumentality of the phantasm to its aid. The intellect itself is not intelligible unless it is made actual by receiving the intelligible species, this for the reason that a potentia as such is not intelligible, it must be known through its acts.

The Platonists held a theory, St. Thomas says, that the intellect can understand only by a participation of the Intelligible.<sup>3</sup> Truly it is so, but this participation cannot be realized any other way—if the act is to remain

<sup>1</sup>St. Thomas, Contra Gent., II, ch. 91.

<sup>2</sup>St. Thomas, Summa, I, qu. 84, art. 7 ad 3um.

<sup>3</sup>St. Thomas, Summa, I, qu. 87, art. 1.

a proper perfection belonging to the nature of man—except by an efficacy natural to man, whereby being his own light, he can see the light of God present in the Ontological truth of things.

In agreement with St. Augustine, St. Thomas maintains that there is an Intellect above the human mind which is the cause of all intelligibility, and ultimately the human mind must be dependent on that, but he further distinguishes that, compared to this, the human intellect is a real cause of its own intelligibility, because it participates in that Uncreated Light (by analogy), the cause of all intelligibility.<sup>1</sup>

St. Thomas by his doctrine of first and second causes maintains the true efficacy of created things as second causes. In the order of nature created substances operate by the virtue of the First Cause, but with a real cooperation on their part. In the order of Intelligence, God is the first cause of all intelligibility, yet what is intelligible to the human mind, is such by a true efficiency on the part of the Acting Intellect. Just as all created causes are participations of the First cause by analogy, likewise is the Intellectus Agens a power by which man participates in that superior Intellect.

Thus that Intellect which is perfect and is the Universal cause of all intelligibility, is that from which the human soul derives its power of participating in that Superior Intellect, and by which power the human soul makes things actually intelligible for its understanding.<sup>2</sup>

If, as Plato said, the forms of things existed apart from material things intelligibly, there would not be need of abstraction. In order to establish

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<sup>1</sup> St. Thomas, De Spir. Creat., art. 10.

<sup>2</sup> St. Thomas, Contra Gent., II, ch. 59.

a theory of knowledge it would be sufficient if the intellect participated in those ideas by its very nature.

St. Augustine did not maintain the doctrine of these self-subsistent intelligibles, but placed the Ideas in the Divine Mind as the Eternal Prototypes of things, making therefore the Divine Mind the foundation of all intelligibility.<sup>1</sup> Not having the doctrine of the Acting Intellect, however, he could not attribute to man the power by which he can participate in the intelligibles, hence in the acquisition of our knowledge the intellect according to him must be dependent upon the Divine Intellect directly for its intelligibles.

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<sup>1</sup>St. Augustine, Confessions, xii, 25.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE DOCTRINE OF DIVINE ILLUMINATION

#### Its Nature and Its Role

St. Augustine does not restrict the scope of human intelligence to the world of mutable things, but by reason of his doctrine of Divine Illumination, another world, distinct from the world of sensible things is open to the soul, whence it derives the notions of truth, goodness, perfection, beauty, necessity, immutability, etc. It is this world which renders the world of sensible things intelligible, because only in the light of necessary truths can be understood the significance of this world.

We saw in our discussion of sensible knowledge—as it was conceived by St. Augustine—that man moves between a material world and a world of Intelligible Truth. Looking both ways, the soul is aware of external bodily modifications and is able to refer them for judgment to the world of Light, or of Truth, because

the intelligent and understanding soul sees the intelligibles in the unchangeable Truth itself, and brings forth its judgments according to the light received from there.<sup>1</sup>

As we have seen, St. Augustine placed the World of ideas of Plato in the Divine Mind, and followed Plotinus who conceived the "world soul" as the

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<sup>1</sup>St. Augustine, De Gen. ad Litt. VIII, n. 47.

activity of the nous. Both Plotinus and St. Augustine built their theory of knowledge upon this fundamental deviation. Plato sought to solve the problem of knowledge by attributing to the nature of the soul a participation in the Ideas; but this doctrine was so transformed by Plotinus, that the soul in its search for knowledge must receive the ideas from the Nous by a sort of illumination.<sup>1</sup> "The Intelligence of man is always filled from above and is illuminated."<sup>2</sup>

The same doctrine is held by St. Augustine, according to whom human knowledge rests on "God who is the Light Illuminating the human soul",<sup>3</sup> so that with all of our true knowledge Eternal Truth is present, which comes before us in a mysterious way, yet with a light most clear.<sup>4</sup>

The relation existing between the soul and its Creator is the closest one of all; God is nearer to the soul than the objects of the external world, so St. Augustine bids us "do not desire to go outside of you, but retire into yourself; truth dwells in the inner man".<sup>5</sup> In our chapter on memory we saw that our notions of truth and happiness cannot be abstracted from the material world according to St. Augustine, therefore, the knowledge of them is explainable only if truth illuminates and good reveals itself to the soul directly. In order, therefore, to find the truth of things by the light of Truth, one has to look within the soul and not to the external things of the body.

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<sup>1</sup>Plotinus, Enneads, II, book 3, ch. 17.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., III, book 8, ch. 15.

<sup>3</sup>St. Augustine, Tract. 15, In Ioa., n. 19.

<sup>4</sup>St. Augustine, De Liber Arbit., 1, m. 33.

<sup>5</sup>St. Augustine, De Ver. Rel., n. 72.

Speaking of the Eternal Laws,<sup>1</sup> he insists that we see these truths in that book of light which is called Truth; and these laws are furthered to man, not through a transmigration, but are placed in his soul by an impression, as the form of the ring is transformed to the wax without leaving the ring. This impression is made by the Divine Light illuminating the soul.

The process of Divine Illumination is expounded in Augustine's explanation of the Genesis.<sup>2</sup> When the Eternal and unchangeable Wisdom transfers itself to intelligent beings, a certain suitability of the luminated intellect arises in them, which suitability we can consider to be a created light in the same manner as when God said: "Let there be light." Here St. Augustine speaks of the descent of wisdom into the human soul, which wisdom itself is a light. This descending illumination causes in the soul a notice, by which we recognize truths in the light of God. But as we saw (Trin. XIV, n. 21) that the form of Eternal Truth does not leave God upon revealing itself to the soul, it is clear that by Divine Illumination, or by "seeing in God" St. Augustine means that we see with a power of understanding, which we receive from God directly and continuously.

Seeking the origin of the notions of ideas which are independent of our sense perceptions we find that

memory contains the idea of number, extension and Eternal laws, none of which is placed in it by the senses, because none of them is colored, nor give rise to sound, odor, taste or hardness.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> St. Augustine, De Trinitate, xiv, n. 21.

<sup>2</sup> St. Augustine, Confessions, XI, n. 10, 11.

<sup>3</sup> St. Augustine, De Trinitate, VIII, n. 13.



The ratio of these are in God, and it is imparted to the soul by the Divine Light, so that we can pass judgment on other things in accordance with these. All our knowledge is dependent upon these ideas, because by them we can pass from the knowledge of material things to a higher knowledge; therefore man can make progress only by virtue of that Light which illuminates the soul just as the corporeal light of the sun illuminates the objects of corporeal sight; the inner sight of man perceives corporeal light.<sup>1</sup> But just as corporeal light differs from the object illuminated, likewise the Divine Light illuminating the soul is distinct from the soul. "The difference between the light and which illuminates/the thing illuminated is as great as the Wisdom which creates and the wisdom which is created",<sup>2</sup> and "Therefore the Light with which the soul is illuminated in order that it know, differs from the soul, because one is God, the other is creature."<sup>3</sup>

We can substantiate our contention that Augustine did not teach an immediate intuition of the Eternal Prototypes in God, when we read his chapters where he calls our knowledge of God in this life an enigma.<sup>4</sup> He describes an enigma as something not clearly seen, comparing it to a misty allegory. We know God just as we know truth; but we see that although having a certain knowledge of truth when we strive to get a clear understanding of it, Truth escapes us.

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<sup>1</sup>St. Augustine, De Liber arbitreo, II, n. 33.

<sup>2</sup>St. Augustine, Confessions, II, 20.

<sup>3</sup>St. Augustine, De Gen. ad Litt., n. 31.

<sup>4</sup>St. Augustine, De Trinitate, xv, n. 16.

Let us not seek what is Truth, because when we do so, the interference of the corporeal forms becloud the imagination and disturb that light which shone for us when we first heard of Truth.<sup>1</sup>

This is why he bids us to "remain by that light if you can" but he says, by reason of our human frailty we fall back readily to earthly things. We see that light, but its brilliance blinds us. This is the greatest enigma "not to see what we cannot not see". Strictly no one sees Truth, yet there is no one who does not see it. We see it, but our vision is imperfect. It is in our mind, yet we cannot think it because the mind is too feeble for it. But the aim of the mind remains nevertheless to understand more fully that excellent thing which our mind is not. Truth is not far from us, it is above us; --not in place but in excellence--and it is present to us by its perpetual light. But because of the exceeding strength of that Light, the mind turns to more familiar things so that "it may be able to understand and behold the invisible things of God by those things which are made."<sup>2</sup>

There is one immutable truth in all our understanding, which truth is superior to our minds, and which is the cause of all intelligibility.

This immutable truth is present and proffers itself in common to all who discern immutable truths, as a secret light in wondrous ways.<sup>3</sup>

It is inextinguishable, because it is nothing but the light of truth, but truth is imperishable. This he proves with an argument. If all things would perish, truth would still subsist in so far as it would be true that every-

<sup>1</sup>St. Augustine, De Trinitate, viii, n. 3.

<sup>2</sup>St. Augustine, De Trinitate, vi, n. 10.

<sup>3</sup>St. Augustine, De Liber Arbit., II, ch. xii.

thing perished; but in supposing even that Truth Itself would perish, in the very notion of it if it is true, we affirm that Truth "is", otherwise the truth of the proposition would not be valid.<sup>1</sup>

Because the light of Truth is perpetually shining,

the soul of man bears witness to that Light, but itself is not that Light; but the Word of God is that true Light which enlightens every man who comes into this world.<sup>2</sup>

Thus man receives a continued Illumination by which he can make a progress in knowledge. We might ask here, if Illumination is a direct act of God shining upon all men, how is it that some fail to make progress in truth? St. Augustine ascribes the failure to the attachment of man to earthly things, which is the result of a lack of self control, or a lack of introspection. To be restored to that Light, man must seek truth within himself rather than without in earthly things.

The theory of Illumination is suited to the plane of Augustine's whole philosophy. It moves in a world of mysticism where a certain intuition of God is an essential element of human knowledge. We must not, however, interpret this intuition in the Ontologists' sense.

The Vatican Council formally denounces any theory of a direct intuition of God, which is at the same time a direct vision of Him, but does not exclude the possibility of "some kind" of intuition, which does not bear the character of seeing. Thus in a sense we can talk of an immediate knowledge

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<sup>1</sup>St. Augustine, Soliloques, II, ii, 2.

<sup>2</sup>St. Augustine, Confessions, VII, 9, 13.

of God which if put into comparison with a mediated knowledge could be called a notice. This safeguards against any confusion with the beatific vision reserved only for the next life, with a kind of intuitive knowledge possible to man during his life on earth. St. Augustine himself tells us that the light which illuminates the soul is God Himself from whom all light comes, but the soul, although created in His likeness and image "palpitat infirmitate et minus valet",<sup>1</sup> when it tries to discover Him.

The measure by which we can discover that Light is found in the memory,<sup>2</sup> but the measure of truth of the forms in the memory is found in Truth itself which illuminates the soul. Thus it is that "the end of knowledge is to behold Truth, but it is by Truth that we can really learn."<sup>3</sup> The truths of science are made intelligible only in that light.

The truths of science are made visible to the mind as the light of the sun makes visible to the eyes, the earth, and the terrestrial objects. But it is God Himself who shines, and reason is such to the mind as sight is to the eyes.<sup>4</sup>

Reason, therefore, is the eye of the mind, by which we can see things in the light of God when we refer to it the forms which are found in the memory. An intuitive knowledge of Truth is necessary for by it we can take notice of the presence of its light because

As the bodily eyes can perceive nothing if they have not the sunlight during the day, in the same way an interior

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<sup>1</sup>St. Augustine, De Gen. ad Litt., xii, p. 31.

<sup>2</sup>St. Augustine, De Trinitate, xi, n. 14.

<sup>3</sup>St. Augustine, Soliloques, II, xx, 35.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., VI, 12.

light is necessary to illuminate reason which is the eye of the soul, and this inward light enlightens the mind as the sun enlightens the eyes, and it is with this light that the soul sees all truth.<sup>1</sup>

St. Thomas says nothing hinders us from ascribing the action of the acting intellect to the light of the soul;<sup>2</sup> so far we noticed that the nature of that light is different, and further we shall see that its application is not by means of abstraction but by judgment.

### The application of Illumination in our Judgments

The intuitive apprehension of Eternal Truth is necessary that the soul can generate in us that form which St. Augustine calls the "verbum mentis", which is none other than a knowledge of the relationship by which our ideas are referred to Eternal Truth in order that we pass judgment upon them.

We have seen in our discussion of sensitive knowledge that by a three-fold process the bodily image passes from the sense to the memory, resulting in the same process within, where we can distinguish again three things, viz: the memory, an internal seeing, and the will.<sup>3</sup>

Thinking then is a co-action of these three things, which by reason of this co-action St. Augustine calls "cogitatio". Understanding is a kind of seeing, while reasoning is a search for that seeing, i. e., a movement to reach to understanding, which movement is drawn by the object. Here St. Augustine distinguishes between "ratio" and "rationatio" as the one ordained

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<sup>1</sup>Hatzfeld, St. Augustine, p. 124.

<sup>2</sup>St. Thomas, Cont. Gent., II, ch. 77.

<sup>3</sup>St. Augustine, De Trinitate, xv, n. 21.

to seeking and the other to seeing, and knowledge results when the object is seen.<sup>1</sup> Reasoning then is a movement of the intelligence following upon sensation, and when the intelligence "sees" the soul is perfected in understanding.

It belongs to the nature of the intelligence to seek the reasons of things, therefore, "when the human intelligence understands material things, it immediately seeks their reason which is in the Divine Word itself."<sup>2</sup> Thus accordingly as the intelligence turns towards earthly things or towards things eternal, St. Augustine distinguishes superior and inferior reason; wisdom belongs to the first and science to the second. But the intelligence is always the same, however, with a two-fold activity. On the one side it moves in the realm of Truth, and on the other it is in touch with the senses, so that it may guide them according to Truth and rule them. The stronger we apprehend truth, the better we understand things in general, and the sharper the sense and reasoning, the better we know them in particular.<sup>3</sup>

The process of thinking then is the following: the senses receive the species from the thing perceived, and the memory receives it from the sense; but the eye of the mind of the thinker receives it from the memory.<sup>4</sup> In Thomistice terms we could say that St. Augustine places the impressed species in the memory.

Everyone who thinks of things corporeal, whether he himself imagine anything or hear, or read either a narrative of things past, or foretelling of things of the future, has

<sup>1</sup>St. Augustine, De Quant. Anim., n. 53.

<sup>2</sup>St. Augustine, De Gen. ad Litt., IV, n. 49.

<sup>3</sup>St. Augustine, De Trinitate, xii, 15-17, 23.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., xi, 14.

recourse to his memory, and finds there the limit and measure of all the forms at which he gazes in his thought.<sup>1</sup>

We can conceive knowledge as a relation between the impressed species, Eternal Truth and the expressed species, which is attained as we shall see later by an act of judgment. The foundation of this relation is Eternal Truth.

To this threefold relation in knowledge a threefold seeing is correspondent.<sup>2</sup> This seeing is in the soul itself whether we see a thing with our senses such as the sky or earth, whether we see them in the soul itself such as the images of things, or whether we see things with the intelligence (Ibid). The seeing of the soul is higher than that of sensation, and the intellectual seeing is highest of all. But corporeal seeing cannot be without a seeing in the soul, therefore, the moment something is perceived, something similar happens in the soul. But there can be a seeing in the soul without a corporeal seeing, but in that case the soul needs intellectual seeing in order to pass judgment, e.g., when an object not present appears to the soul. But intellectual seeing does not always need the seeing of the soul, and this is how it can pass judgment in both ways, i. e., in both kinds of knowledge.

The lower two knowledges can make mistakes, but not the intellectual seeing. "In this intellectual vision man is never deceived; he either understands it and then it is true, or if it be not true, he does not understand it."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., xi, 14.

<sup>2</sup>St. Augustine, De Gen. ad Litt., xii, n. 50.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., n. 51.

When a corporeal image is received from sensation it is embraced in the memory, and is referred to that form which belongs to the life of the soul (the power to see intellectually) and is united to it by the will.

The will itself as it directs the senses towards the object present and unites it with it, applies the memory to sensation, and the eye of the mind of the thinker to the memory, so that there be a similar seeing in thought.<sup>1</sup>

The application of Divine Illumination begins to play a role here with the bearing of man's moral character. In order to think clearly we must distinguish the species in the memory from that which is in the mind. In false thinking the eye of the mind does not correspond with what is in the memory. Often the will moves the memory towards bodily images with so much force that even thinking cannot distinguish whether the thing is seen externally or is it seen only within. The power of the soul is so great over the body, that it can change it by its influence as if changing its garment. This lack of differentialation can take place in the case of sleep, ecstasy, or in full consciousness.<sup>2</sup> If the image of the external object ceases in the memory, the will cannot unite it with the eye of the mind, but because the soul has the power to imagine things forgotten or never perceived, the will can thus unite these false images in the memory. Here we see the importance of this distinction in our effort of discerning the true from the false.

Correct thinking is regulated further by two conditions: first, we must not desire corporeal things too ardently if they are pleasing to us, nor should

<sup>1</sup>St. Augustine, De Trinitate, xi, n. 15.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., n. 7.



we shun them if they are unpleasant. Love is the measure on one side of the scale, and fear on the other. The role of a good will is to bring the two into harmony.<sup>1</sup> If we desire that the will shall not love the pleasing and shun the repugnant more than necessary we must refer them to Eternal Truth and judge of them in that light.<sup>2</sup>

The purpose of a good will and of true knowledge (which is consequent upon a good will) is one, i. e., to see. This seeing ultimately is perfected in the beatific vision in the life to come, but in this life the end of the will is to lead to the knowledge of the greatest good as much as possible. If the will loves the Eternal Truth residing in the soul more than the corporeal things, then it is a good will, but in the opposite case it is evil.<sup>3</sup>

This corporeal love, and the love of Eternal Truth influence the conception of the "word" in the soul. The word is conceived by love; but St. Augustine distinguishes between two kinds of love calling the one corporeal desire with which we seek earthly things, and the other spiritual love or love strictly speaking, by which we seek truth in the light of God.

The word is conceived by love either of the creature or of the Creator; i. e., either of changeable nature or of unchangeable Truth. Therefore, either by desire or by love. For it is desire when the creature is loved for himself, and then it does not help the man but corrupts him in the enjoyment of it. When therefore the creature is equal to us or inferior, we must use the inferior in order to reach God, and enjoy the equal only in God.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>St. Augustine, Ibid., xi, 7-13.

<sup>2</sup>St. Augustine, Ibid., ix, n. 10.

<sup>3</sup>St. Augustine, Ibid., ix, n. 10-13.

<sup>4</sup>St. Augustine, Ibid., ix, 13.

That is the true "word" when the word conceived is identical with the word generated, and only in that kind of word can the soul find rest. But such unity can only be found in the word generated by spiritual love, where we see at once without a distinct momentum of conception and the birth of the word. But in the love of corporeal things like in the offspring of the animal, the momentum of conception is one thing and the bringing forth of the offspring is another. Here the desire of corporeal things brings forth the conception of the word, but that birth should be given to it, judgment must be passed on it. Just as in the soul of the miser the word "gold" is conceived when he sees gold, but is fully born when he obtains the gold.<sup>1</sup>

If we do not love Eternal Truth better than earthly things, it is because our knowledge is not in proportion to it. In that case the will cannot find rest because its continued striving for earthly things keeps that conception of the word separate from its birth, i. e., from the judgment we pass on it. But if we keep Eternal Truth before all our judgments, we see at once and thus we have a proper act of understanding.

Here we see that our ideas are not conceived by means of an act of abstraction, but by an act of judgment by which we refer the movements of the soul to Eternal Truth illuminating the soul, and once more the ethical bearing of St. Augustine's theory of knowledge comes into view.

In order to be able to pass judgment of things in the light which illuminates the soul of every one who comes into this world, one has to purify his heart. Only thus can man make progress in the knowledge of spiritual things

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<sup>1</sup>St. Augustine, De Trinitate, ix, 14.

which is his greatest good, because a corrupted will degenerates the mind into its instrument of despising truth. Thus a humble heart is required in order to pursue knowledge. The pagans did not find truth, because "the frailty of man possessed them and Divine Providence justly opposing their vainglory"<sup>1</sup> did not reveal it to them.

To comprehend truth with the eye of the soul is given to those only who attained moral perfection to some degree. "God wanted only the pure to know truth, and which no one but the pure can find."<sup>2</sup> Therefore, who does not possess an orderly love, reasoning alone will not help him in the acquisition of truth.

We find this teaching with the pagans already. Socrates, who cultivated philosophy for the improvement of morals, is the first to express it, and he believed that we can come to a knowledge of truth by way of good morality only. Plato was of the same opinion as his master as is seen in his *Phaedo* II.

St. Augustine sees the purification of the soul in seven steps, which culminate in the answer to the prayer "Create a pure heart and renew the true soul in me O Lord." (*Psalm*, 50.) Whoever attains to that height finds complacency in his knowledge because he is able to pass all his judgments in the conception of his knowledge in the light which illuminates the soul.

But those turned away from the Light go through some steps, at least to the degree where the corporeal movements are considered. When the body has certain desires the soul moves accordingly, and from this twofold movement of body and soul, new steps come to life, which are, however, but new reproduc-

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<sup>1</sup>St. Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, II, c. 7.

<sup>2</sup>St. Augustine, *Tract. in Joan.*, 18, n. 2-3.

tions of the same ones, and hence not raising man to the height of the above perfection. These are the movements by which the soul falls away from the Light and from Truth, and therefore is deprived of that participation of truth which is its natural inclination. Being continuously frustrated from the true conception of the word, or from the vision of things in the light of Eternal Truth, the soul is in anguish in its continuous strife with the body in the pursuit of corporeal things, and only a good will can restore that harmony so that the continuous striving of the soul will not be in vain. This is the limit of philosophizing and where the application of Divine Grace is necessary, so that with the strength of faith we lay hold upon The End and pursue our acts accordingly, because in that light we distinguish at once the truths which are in harmony with it and those which are not. There are some, St. Augustine says, who maintain that the truths proposed by faith are contradictory to the truths discovered by reason—without knowing that with reason alone and without moral purity they cannot find truth. "Let us not affirm too boldly of invisible things as if we would know them, but only as we believe them, because they are visible only to the pure of heart."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>St. Augustine, De Fid. et Symb., c. 9.

## CONCLUSION

Thomassin, in his "Theologica Dogmatica" remarks "What is said in Plato lives in Augustine." We may also say of St. Thomas, what Aristotle put in writing St. Thomas infused with life; because in order to live, in order to be a vehicle for the beatitude of man, philosophy must be subordinated to the truths proposed by Christianity. It will be shown in another thesis that both Augustine and St. Thomas completed this task, although the principles followed by each brought them in apparent divergencies in the theory of knowledge; but following the Christian notion of Being based on the revealed truth "I am who am", they find agreement in the fundamentals and the ultimate conclusions of their speculations.

As we have seen in the preceding chapters the principal difference of the two theories of knowledge lies in St. Thomas' restriction of the origin of our ideas to the perceptual world by means of abstraction, while Augustine's ideology rests on the doctrine of Divine Illumination. That both solutions can be accepted is shown by St. Thomas' attitude, who allows the theory of Divine Illumination tenable,<sup>1</sup> although he does not find it acceptable in his own system.

Both St. Thomas and Augustine equally maintain a weakness of the human intellect in the face of immutable Truth, but each ascribes it to a different

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<sup>1</sup>St. Thomas, In Lib. Sent. Dist. 17, qu. 2.

cause. Augustine finds the fault with the fall of man, while St. Thomas regards it as a weakness inherent in the human mind, which neither has knowledge, nor can acquire knowledge save through the medium of the senses. To St. Thomas, the intelligibility of the physical world is inherent in it, and for the understanding of it the light of natural reason suffices. He is one with Augustine in affirming that a passing from potential knowledge to actual knowledge does not take place without the concurrence of God, but he differs upon the nature of this concurrence.

Truly Augustine could say "in ourselves we are nothing"; having been created to know, in himself man could not fulfill the function most proper to his nature, unless his mind was continuously illuminated by a direct act of God. If he were cut off from this power rendering intelligible the world he lives in, man would stand blind in the face of truth.

Indeed, St. Thomas does maintain that ultimately the mind must be dependent upon the Divine Light infusing intelligibility with the very being of each thing created, but unless that intelligibility is reached by an efficiency natural to man, and not by a virtue outside and over his nature, man could not properly be called rational. Therefore, in the acquisition of our knowledge the nature of being and the nature of the human intellect suffice.

With St. Augustine we have seen that, in order to see truth, the interior eye of the soul must be pure,<sup>1</sup> but a purification can only be effected by Faith; thus the very nature of knowledge requires that authority should determine its content. To St. Thomas, on the other hand, while Faith serves as a

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<sup>1</sup>St. Augustine, The Usefulness of Belief, ch. xvi.

guide in the progress of our knowledge, in the origin of our ideas, the only authority impelling the intellect is the authority of evidence, which is nothing else but the light of being and the light of the Acting Intellect rendering the light of being absorbable to man.

We must keep in mind, however, that St. Augustine was not so interested in building a system of philosophy as such, as to give a spontaneous expression of his own directive guide for a full Christian life.

To both philosophers, man is more than just a thing of nature. He is a natural thing with a supernatural destiny. To St. Thomas man is a being on the horizon of the natural and the supernatural; Augustine sees man between a world of sensible things and intelligible truth in God, but looking at man in his operations St. Thomas, with the use of his Aristotelian principles, is able to draw the line of demarcation between the natural and the supernatural with a clearer distinction than is to be found in Augustine. But the power of speculation is not decreased in Augustine by this commingling of the natural and the supernatural, but on the contrary it lends him a many-sidedness, so much so that an interpretation from various points of view is possible. This fact gave rise to the interest in Augustine's speculations in our times by the Ontologists, Occasionalists. By this fact St. Thomas found it so easy to interpret him in the Aristotelian sense.

Many critics see a gap between Augustine's theory of sensible and intellectual knowledge,<sup>1</sup> but if we watch his solution in the light of his basic problem, which is repeatedly expressed in his various writings, "Oh Truth,

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<sup>1</sup>Stockl, Geschichte der Phil., p. 128.

how I desire you from the depth of my soul", i. e., his search for the nature of truth, we find a harmonious subordination of sensible knowledge to Intelligence. And because Augustine's theory of knowledge is primarily a quest of truth and not an explanation of the process of human knowledge, we cannot find discord between him and St. Thomas although there are divergencies.

The approach of the problem of knowledge is different with each philosopher, but the role of each is equally important in the study of philosophy. St. Augustine is inspirational, ardent, his is a philosophy of the heart; while in St. Thomas we find the didactic restraint of a sober intellectual light; the latter abounds in what is rarely found in Augustine--a completeness and clarity in treatment--and Augustine offers what is lacking in St. Thomas--a fervor capturing the heart.



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